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HISTORICAL SKETCHES
of British
STATESMEN

WHO FLOURISHED IN
THE TIME OF GEORGE III.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,
REMARKS ON PARTY, AND AN APPENDIX.

FIRST SERIES.

BY
HENRY LORD BROUGHAM, F. R. S.,
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CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

Mr. Sheridan	9
Mr. Windham	19
Mr. Dundas	29
Mr. Erskine	41
Mr. Perceval	49
Lord Grenville	63
Mr. Grattan	71
Mr. Wilberforce	83
Mr. Canning	93
Sir Samuel Romilly	109
Effects of Party	119
Franklin	135
Frederick II.	143
Gustavus III.	171
The Emperor Joseph	187
The Empress Catherine	203

APPENDIX.

I. Note on this Work	219
II. Communication respecting Lord Chatham	221
III. Letter from Lady Charlotte Lindsay on Lord North	223
IV. Statement of the case between Queen Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots	230

STATESMEN
OF THE
TIMES OF GEORGE III.

MR. SHERIDAN.

OF Mr. Fox's adherents who have justly been named, the most remarkable certainly was Mr. Sheridan, and with all his faults, and all his failings, and all his defects, the first in genius and greatest in power. When the illustrious name of Erskine appears in the bright catalogue, it is unnecessary to add that we here speak of parliamentary genius and political power.

These sketches as naturally begin with a notice of the means by which the great rhetorical combatants were brought up, and trained and armed for the conflict, as Homer's battles do with the buckling on of armour and other note of preparation, when he brings his warriors forward upon the scene. Of Mr. Sheridan, any more than of Mr. Burke, it cannot be lamented, as of almost all other English statesmen, that he came prematurely into public life, without time given for preparation by study. Yet this time in his case had been far otherwise spent than in Mr. Burke's. Though his education had not been neglected, for he was bred at Harrow, and with Dr. Parr, yet he was an idle and a listless boy, learning as little as possible, and suffering

as much wretchedness; an avowal which to the end of his life he never ceased to make, and to make in a very affecting manner. Accordingly, he brought away from school a very slender provision of classical learning; and his taste never correct or chaste, was wholly formed by acquaintance with the English poets and dramatists, and perhaps a few of our more ordinary prose-writers; for in no other language could he read with any thing approaching to ease. Of those poets, he most *professed* to admire and to have studied Dryden; he plainly *had* most studied Pope, whom he always vilified and always imitated. But of dramatists his passion evidently was Congreve, and after him Vanburgh, Farquhar, even Wycherly; all of whom served for the model, partly even for the magazine of his own dramatic writings, as Pope did of his verses. "The Duenna," however, is formed after the fashion of Gay; of whom it falls further short than the "School for Scandal" does of Congreve. That his plays were great productions for any age, astonishing for a youth of twenty-three and twenty-five, is unquestionable. Johnson has accounted for the phenomenon of Congreve, at a still earlier period of life, showing much knowledge of the world, by observing that, on a close examination, his dialogues and characters might have been gathered from books "without much actual commerce with mankind." The same can hardly be said of the "School for Scandal;" but the author wrote it when he was five years older than Congreve had been at the date of the "Old Bachelor."

Thus with an ample share of literary and dramatic reputation, but not certainly of the kind most auspicious for a statesman; with a most slender provision of knowledge at all likely to be useful in political affairs; with

a position by birth and profession little suited to command the respect of the most aristocratic country in Europe—the son of an actor, the manager himself of a theatre—he came into that parliament which was enlightened by the vast and various knowledge, as well as fortified and adorned by the more choice literary fame of a Burke, and which owned the sway of consummate orators like Fox and Pitt. His first effort was unambitious, and it was unsuccessful. Aiming at but a low flight, he failed in that humble attempt. An experienced judge, Woodfall, told him “It would never do;” and counselled him to seek again the more congenial atmosphere of Drury-lane. But he was resolved that it should do; he had taken his part; and, as he felt the matter was in him, he vowed not to desist till “he had brought it out.” What he wanted in acquired learning, and in natural quickness, he made up by indefatigable industry: within given limits, towards a present object, no labour could daunt him; no man could work for a season with more steady and unwearied application. By constant practice in small matters, or before private committees, by diligent attendance upon all debates, by habitual intercourse with all dealers in political wares, from the chiefs of parties and their more refined coteries to the providers of daily discussion for the public and the chroniclers of parliamentary speeches, he trained himself to a facility of speaking, absolutely essential to all but first-rate genius, and all but necessary even to that; and he acquired what acquaintance with the science of politics he ever possessed, or his speeches ever betrayed. By these steps he rose to the rank of a first-rate speaker. and as great a debater as a want of readiness and need for preparation would permit.

He had some qualities which led him to this rank, and which only required the habit of speech to bring them out into successful exhibition; a warm imagination, though more prone to repeat with variations the combinations of others, or to combine anew their creations, than to bring forth original productions; a fierce, dauntless spirit of attack; a familiarity, acquired from his dramatic studies, with the feelings of the heart and the ways to touch its chords; a facility of epigram and point, the yet more direct gift of the same theatrical apprenticeship; an excellent manner, not unconnected with that experience; and a depth of voice which perfectly suited the tone of his declamation, be it invective, or be it descriptive, or be it impassioned. His wit, derived from the same source, or sharpened by the same previous habits, was eminently brilliant, and almost always successful; it was like all his speaking, exceedingly prepared, but was skilfully introduced and happily applied; and it was well mingled also with humour, occasionally descending to farce. How little it was the inspiration of the moment all men were aware who knew his habits; but a singular proof of this was presented by Mr. Moore when he came to write his life; for we there find given to the world, with a frankness which must almost have made their author shake in his grave, the secret note-books of this famous wit; and are thus enabled to trace the jokes, in embryo, with which he had so often made the walls of St. Stephen's shake, in a merriment excited by the happy appearance of sudden unpremeditated effusion.*

*Take an instance from this author, giving extracts from the common-place book of the wit:—"He employs his fancy in his narrative, and keeps his recollections for his wit." Again, the same

The adroitness with which he turned to account sudden occasions of popular excitement, and often at the expense of the Whig party, generally too indifferent to such advantages, and too insensible to the damage they thus sustained in public estimation, is well known. On the mutiny in the fleet, he was beyond all question right; on the French invasion, and on the attacks upon Napoleon, he was almost as certainly wrong; but these appeals to the people and to the national feelings of the House tended to make the orator well received, if they added little to the statesman's reputation; and of the latter character he was not ambitious. His most celebrated speech was certainly the one upon the "Begum Charge" in the proceedings against Hastings; and nothing can exceed the accounts left us of its unprecedented success. Not only the practice then first began, which has gradually increased till it greets every good speech, of cheering, on the speaker resuming his seat, but the minister besought the House to adjourn the decision of the question, as being incapacitated from forming a just judgment under the influence of such powerful eloquence; while all men on all sides vied with each other in extolling so wonderful a performance.

idea is expanded into—"When he makes his jokes you applaud the accuracy of his memory, and 'tis only when he states his facts that you admire the flights of his imagination." But the thought was too good to be thus wasted on the desert air of a common-place book. So forth it came at the expense of Kelly, who, having been a composer of music, became a wine merchant. "You will," said the *ready* wit, "import your music and compose your wine." Nor was this service exacted from the old idea thought sufficient—so in the House of Commons an easy and apparently off-hand parenthesis was thus filled with it at Mr. Dundas's cost and charge " (who generally resorts to his memory for his jokes, and to his imagination for his facts)."

Nevertheless, the opinion has now become greatly prevalent, that a portion of this success was owing to the speech having so greatly surpassed all the speaker's former efforts; to the extreme interest of the topics which the subject naturally presented; and to the artist-like elaboration and beautiful delivery of certain fine passages, rather than to the merits of the whole. Certain it is, that the repetition of great part of it, presented in the short-hand notes of the speech on the same charge in Westminster Hall, disappoints every reader who has heard of the success which attended the earlier effort. In truth, Mr. Sheridan's taste was very far from being chaste, or even moderately correct; he delighted in gaudy figures; he was attracted by glare; and cared not whether the brilliancy came from tinsel or gold, from broken glass or pure diamond; he overlaid his thoughts with epigrammatic diction; he "played to the galleries," and indulged them, of course, with an endless succession of clap-traps. His worst passages by far were those which he evidently preferred himself; full of imagery often far-fetched, oftener gorgeous, and loaded with point that drew the attention of the hearer away from the thoughts to the words; and his best by far were those where he declaimed, with his deep clear voice, though somewhat thick utterance, with a fierce defiance of some adversary, or an unappeasable vengeance against some oppressive act; or reasoned rapidly, in the like tone, upon some plain matter of fact, or exposed as plainly to homely ridicule some puerile sophism: and in all this, his admirable manner was aided by an eye singularly piercing,* and a countenance

* It had the singularity of never winking.

which, though coarse, and even in some features gross was yet animated and expressive, and could easily assume the figure of both rage, and menace, and scorn. The few sentences with which he thrilled the House on the liberty of the press in 1810 were worth, perhaps, more than all his elaborated epigrams and forced flowers on the Begum Charge, or all his denunciations of Napoleon; “whose morning orisons and evening prayers are for the conquest of England, whether he bends to the God of Battles or worships the Goddess of Reason;”^{*} certainly far better than such pictures of his power, as his having “thrones for his watch-towers, kings for his sentinels, and for the palisades of his castle, sceptres stuck with crowns.”† “Give them,” said he in 1810, and in a far higher strain of eloquence, “a corrupt House of Lords; give them a venal House of Commons; give them a tyrannical Prince; give them a truckling Court,—and let me but have an unfettered press; I will defy them to encroach a hair’s-breadth upon the liberties of England.”‡ Of all his speeches there can be little doubt that the most powerful, as the most chaste, was his reply, in 1805, upon the motion which he had made for repealing the Defence Act. Mr. Pitt had unwarily thrown out a sneer at his support of Mr. Addington, as though it was insidious. Such a stone, cast by a person whose house on that aspect was one pane of glass, could not fail to call down a shower of missiles; and they who witnessed the looks and gestures of the aggressor under the pitiless pelting of the tempest which he had provoked, represent it as

^{*} 1802.

† 1807.

‡ 1810.

certain that there were moments when he intended to fasten a personal quarrel upon the vehement and implacable declaimer.*

When the just tribute of extraordinary admiration has been bestowed upon this great orator, the whole of his praise has been exhausted. As a statesman, he is without a place in any class, or of any rank ; it would be incorrect and flattering to call him a bad, or a hurtful, or a short-sighted, or a middling statesman ; he was no statesman at all. As a party man, his character stood lower than it deserved, chiefly from certain personal dislikes towards him ; for, with the perhaps doubtful exception of his courting popularity at his party's expense on the two occasions already mentioned, and the much more serious charge against him of betraying his party in the Carlton House negotiation of 1812, followed by his extraordinary denial of the facts when he last appeared in Parliament, there can nothing be laid to his charge as inconsistent with the rules of the strictest party duty and honour ; although he made as large sacrifices as any unprofessional man ever did to the cause of a long and hopeless Opposition, and was often treated with unmerited coldness and disrespect by his coadjutors. But as a man, his character stood confessedly low ; his intemperate habits, and his pecuniary embarrassments, did not merely tend to imprudent conduct, by which himself alone might be the sufferer ; they involved his family in the same fate ; and they also undermined those principles of honesty which are so seldom found to survive

* Mr. Sheridan wrote this speech during the debate at a coffee-house near the Hall ; and it is reported most accurately in the Parliamentary debates, apparently from his own notes.

fallen fortunes, and hardly ever can continue the ornament and the stay of ruined circumstances, when the tastes and the propensities engendered in prosperous times survive through the ungenial season of adversity. Over the frailties and even the faults of genius, it is permitted to draw a veil, after marking them as much as the interests of virtue require, in order to warn against the evil example, and preserve the sacred flame bright and pure from such unworthy and unseemly contamination.

MR. WINDHAM.

MR. WINDHAM.

Among the members of his party, to whom we have alluded as agreeing ill with Mr. Sheridan, and treating him with little deference, Mr. Windham was the most distinguished. The advantages of a refined classical education, a lively wit of the most pungent and yet abstruse description, a turn for subtle reasoning, drawing nice distinctions and pursuing remote analogies, great and early knowledge of the world, familiarity with men of letters and artists, as well as politicians, with Burke, Johnson, and Reynolds, as well as with Fox and North, much acquaintance with constitutional history and principle, a chivalrous spirit, a noble figure, a singularly expressive countenance—all fitted this remarkable person to shine in debate; but were all, when put together, unequal to the task of raising him to the first rank; and were, besides, mingled with defects which exceedingly impaired the impression of his oratory, while they diminished his usefulness and injured his reputation as a statesman. For he was too often the dupe of his own ingenuity; which made him doubt and balance, and gave an oscitancy fatal to vigour in council, as well as most prejudicial to the effects of eloquence, by breaking the force of his blows as they fell. His nature, too, perhaps owing to this hesitating disposition, was to be a follower, if not a worshipper, rather than an original thinker or actor; as if he felt some relief under the doubts which harassed him from so many quarters, in

thus taking shelter under a master's wing, and devolving upon a less scrupulous balancer of conflicting reasons, the task of trimming the scales, and forming his opinions for him. Accordingly, first Johnson in private, and afterwards Burke on political matters, were the deities whom he adored; and he adhered manfully to the strong opinions of the latter, though oftentimes painfully compelled to suppress his sentiments, all the time that he took council with Mr. Pitt and Lord Grenville, who would only consent to conduct the French war upon principles far lower and more compromising than those of the great anti-Jacobin and anti-Gallican leader. But when untrammelled by official connexion, and having his lips sealed by no decorum or prudence or other observance prescribed by station, it was a brave sight to see this gallant personage descend into the field of debate, panting for the fray, eager to confront any man or any number of men that might prove his match, scorning all the little suggestions of a paltry discretion, heedless of every risk of retort to which he might expose himself, as regardless of popular applause as of Court favour, nay, from his natural love of danger and disdain of every thing like fear, rushing into the most offensive expression of the most unpopular opinions with as much alacrity as he evinced in braving the power and daring the enmity of the Crown. Nor was the style of his speaking at all like that of other men's. It was in the easy tone of familiar conversation; but it was full of nice observation and profound remark; it was instinct with classical allusion; it was even over-informed with philosophic and with learned reflection; it sparkled with the finest wit—a wit which was as far superior to

Sheridan's, as his to the gambols of the Clown, or the movements of Pantaloon; and his wit, how exuberant soever, still seemed to help on the argument, as well as to illustrate the meaning of the speaker. He was, however, in the main, a serious, a persuasive speaker, whose words plainly flowed from deep and vehement, and long considered, and well weighed, feelings of the heart. *Erat summa gravitas; erat cum gravitate junctus facetiarum et urbanitatis oratorius non scurrilis lepos. Latine loquendi accurata et sine molestiâ diligens elegantia. (Cic. Brut.)*

The rock on which he so often made shipwreck in debate, and still oftener in council or action, was that love of paradox, on which the tide of his exuberant ingenuity naturally carried him, as it does many others, who, finding so much more may be said in behalf of an untenable position than at first sight appeared possible to themselves, or than ordinary minds can at any time apprehend, begin to bear with the erroneous dogma, and end by adopting it.*

"They first endure, then pity, then embrace."

So he was, from the indomitable bravery of his disposition, and his loathing of every thing mean, or that savoured of truckling to mere power, not unfrequently led to prefer a course of conduct, or a line of argument, because of their running counter to public opinion or the

* They who have been engaged in professional business with the late Mr. John Clerk (afterwards Lord Eldin), may recollect how often that great lawyer was carried away to entertain paradoxical opinions exactly by the process here described.

general feeling ; instead of confining his disregard to popularity within just bounds, and holding on his course in pursuit of truth and right, in spite of its temporary disfavour with the people. With these errors there was generally much truth mingled, or at least much that was manifestly wrong tinged the tenets or the conduct he was opposing ; yet he was not the less an unsafe councillor, and in debate a dangerous ally. His conduct on the Volunteer question, the interference of the City with Military Rewards, the Amusements of the People, and Cruelty to Animals, afforded instances of this mixed description, where he was led into error by resisting almost equal error on the opposite hand ; yet do these questions also afford proof of the latter part of the foregoing proposition ; for what sound or rational view could justify his hostility to all voluntary defence, his reprobation of all expression of public gratitude for the services of our soldiers and sailors, his unqualified defence of bull-baiting, his resistance of all checks upon cruelty towards the brute creation ? Upon other subjects of still graver import his paradoxes stood prominent and mischievous ; unredeemed by ingenuity, unpalliated by opposite exaggeration, and even unmitigated by any admixture of truth. He defended the Slave Trade, which he had at first opposed, only because the French Royalists were injured by the revolt which their own follies had occasioned in St. Domingo ; he resisted all mitigation of our Criminal Law, only because it formed a part of our antiquated jurisprudence, like trial by battle, nay by ordeal of fire and water ; and he opposed every project for Educating the People. It required all men's tenderness

towards undoubted sincerity and clear disinterestedness to think charitably of such pernicious heresies in such a man. It demanded all this charity and all this faith in the spotless honour of his character, to believe that such opinions could really be the convictions of a mind like his. It was the greatest tribute which could be paid to his sterling merit, his fine parts, his rare accomplishments, that, in spite of such wild aberrations, he was still admired and beloved.

To convey any notion of his oratory by giving passages of his speeches is manifestly impossible. Of the mixed tenderness and figure in which he sometimes indulged, his defence of the military policy pursued by him while in office against the attempts made to change it the year after, might be mentioned; the fine speech, especially, in which, on taking leave of the subject, after comparing the two plans of recruiting our army to a dead stick thrust into the ground and a living sapling planted to take root in the soil, he spoke of carving his name upon the tree as lovers do when they would perpetuate the remembrance of their passions or their misfortunes. Of his happy allusions to the writings of kindred spirits, an example, but not at all above their average merit, is afforded in his speech upon the peace of Amiens, when he answered the remarks upon the uselessness of the Royal title, then given up, of King of France, by citing the bill of costs brought in by Dean Swift against Marlborough, and the comparative account of the charges of a Roman triumph, where the crown of laurel is set down at twopence. But sometimes he would convulse the House by a happy, startling, and

most unexpected allusion; as when on the Walcheren question, speaking of a *coup-de-main* on Antwerp, which had been its professed object, he suddenly said, "A *coup-de-main* in the Scheldt! You might as well talk of a *coup-de-main* in the Court of Chancery." Sir William Grant having just entered and taken his seat, probably suggested this excellent jest; and assuredly no man enjoyed it more. His habitual gravity was overpowered in an instant, and he was seen absolutely to roll about on the bench which he had just occupied. So a word or two artistly introduced would often serve him to cover the adverse argument with ridicule. When arguing that they who would protect animals from cruelty have more on their hands than they are aware of, and that they cannot stop at preventing cruelty, but must also prohibit killing, he was met by the old answer, that we kill them to prevent them overrunning the earth, and then he said in passing, and, as it were, parenthetically—"An indifferent reason, by the way, for destroying fish." His two most happy and picturesque, though somewhat caricatured, descriptions of Mr. Pitt's diction, have been already mentioned; that it was a state-paper style, and that he believed he could speak a King's speech off-hand. His gallantry in facing all attacks was shown daily; and how little he cared for allusions to the offensive expressions treasured up against him, and all the more easily remembered because of the epigrams in which he had embalmed them, might be seen from the way he himself would refer to them, as if not wishing they should be forgotten. When some phrase of his, long after it was first used, seemed to invite attack, and a

great cheer followed, as if he had unwittingly fallen into the scrape, he stopped and added, "Why, I said it on purpose!" or, as he pronounced it, "a purpose;" for no man more delighted in the old pronunciation, as well as the pure Saxon idiom of our language, which yet he could enrich and dignify with the importations of classical phraseology.

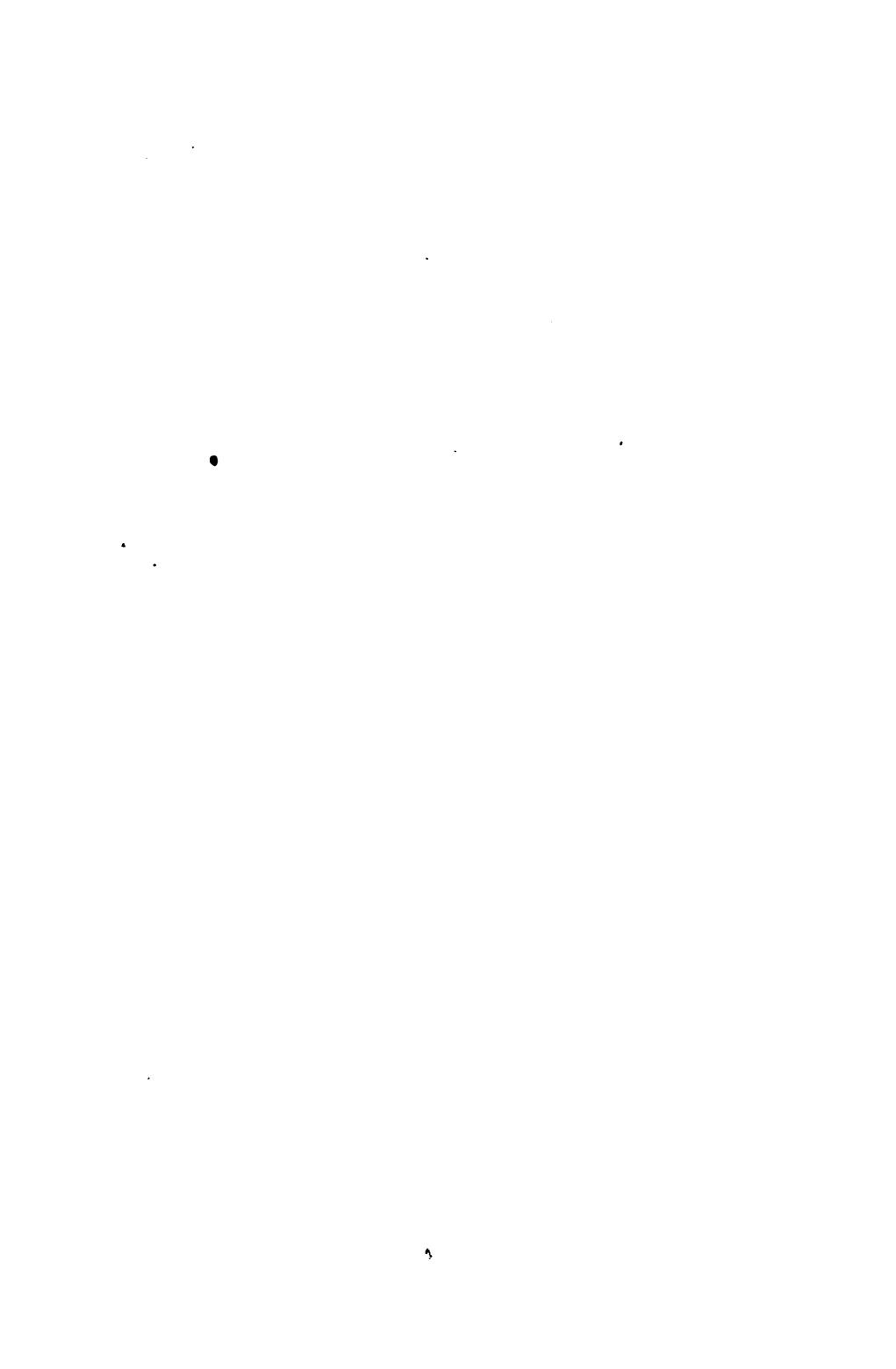
From what has been said of Mr. Windham's manner of speaking, as well as of his variously embellished mind, it will readily be supposed that in society he was destined to shine almost without a rival. His manners were the most polished, and noble, and courteous, without the least approach to pride, or affectation, or condescension; his spirits were, in advanced life, so gay, that he was always younger than the youngest of his company; his relish of conversation was such, that after lingering to the latest moment he joined whatever party a sultry evening (or morning, as it might chance to prove) tempted to haunt the streets before retiring to rest. How often have we accompanied him to the door of his own mansion, and then been attended by him to our own, while the streets rang with the peals of his hearty merriment, or echoed the accents of his refined and universal wit! But his conversation, or grave, or gay, or argumentative, or discursive, whether sifting a difficult subject, or painting an interesting character, or pursuing a merely playful fancy, or lively to very drollery, or pensive and pathetic, or losing itself in the clouds of metaphysics, or vexed with paradox, or plain and homely, and all but common-place, was that which, to be understood, must have been listened to; and while over the whole was flung a veil of

unrent classical elegance, through no crevice, had there been any, would ever an unkind or ill-conditioned sentiment have found entrance !

*" Scilicet omne sacrum mors importuna profanat
Omnibus obsecras injicit ille manus—
Ossa quæta precor, tutâ requiescite in urnâ ;
Et sit humus cineri non onerosa tuo !"**

* Relentless death each purer form profanes,
Round all that's fair his dismal arms he throws—
Light lie the earth that shrouds thy loved remains,
And softly slumbering may they taste repose !—

MR. DUNDAS.



MR. DUNDAS.

IF we turn from those whose common principles and party connexion ranged them against Mr. Pitt, to the only effectual supporter whom he could rely upon as a colleague on the Treasury Bench, we shall certainly find ourselves contemplating a personage of very inferior pretensions, although one whose powers were of the most useful description. Mr. Dundas, afterwards Lord Melville, had no claim whatever to those higher places among the orators of his age, which were naturally filled by the great men whom we have been describing; nor indeed could he be deemed *inter oratorum numerum* at all. He was a plain, business-like speaker; a man of every-day talents in the House; a clear, easy, fluent, and, from much practice, as well as strong and natural sense, a skilful debater; successful in profiting by an adversary's mistakes; distinct in opening a plan and defending a Ministerial proposition; capable of producing even a great effect upon his not unwilling audience by his broad and coarse appeals to popular prejudices, and his confident statements of fact—those statements which Sir Francis Burdett once happily observed, “men fall into through an inveterate habit of official assertion.” In his various offices no one was more useful. He was an admirable man of business; and those professional habits which he had brought from the bar (where he practised long enough for a youth of his fortunate family to reach the highest official place) were

not more serviceable to him in making his speeches perspicuous, and his reasoning logical, than they were in disciplining his mind to the drudgery of the desk, and helping him to systematise, as well as to direct, the machinery of his department. After quitting the profession of the law, to which, indeed, he had for some of the later years of Lord North's Administration only nominally belonged, and leaving also the office of Lord Advocate, which he retained for several years after, he successively filled the place of Minister for India, for the Home and War Departments, and for Naval Affairs. But it was in the first of these capacities, while at the head of the India Board, and while Chairman of the Committee of the Commons upon India, that his great capacity for affairs shone chiefly forth; and that he gave solid and long-continued proof of an indefatigable industry, which neither the distractions of debate in Parliament, nor the convivial habits of the man and of the times ever could interrupt or relax. His celebrated Reports upon all the complicated questions of our Asiatic policy, although they may not stand a comparison with some of Mr. Burke's, in the profundity and enlargement of general views, any more than their style can be compared with his, are nevertheless performances of the greatest merit, and repositories of information upon that vast subject, unrivalled for clearness and extent. They, together with Lord Wellesley's Despatches, form the sources from which the bulk of all the knowledge possessed upon Indian matters is to be derived by the statesmen of the present day.

If in his official departments, and in the contests of Parliament, Mr. Dundas rendered able service, and pos-

essed great weight, it was in Scotland, his native country, whose language he spoke, and whose whole affairs he directed, that his power and his authority chiefly prevailed. Before the reform in our representation and our municipal institutions, the undisturbed possession of patronage by a leading member of the Government, was very sure to carry along with it a paramount influence, both over the representatives of this ancient kingdom and over their constituents. Why the submission to men in high place, and endowed with the power of conferring many favours, should have been so much more absolute in the northern than in the southern parts of our island, it would be needless to inquire. Whether it arose from the old feudal habits of the nation, or from its poverty, joined with a laudable ambition to rise in the world above the pristine station, or from the wary and provident character of the people; certain it is that they displayed a devotion for their political superiors, and a belief in their infallibility, which would have done no discredit to the clansmen of those chieftains who, whilom both granted out the lands of the sept, retained the stipulated services of the vassal, and enjoyed the rights of jurisdiction and of punishment, whereby obedience was secured, and zealous attachment stimulated in its alliance with wholesome terror.

That Mr. Dundas enjoyed this kind of ministerial sovereignty and received this homage in a more ample measure than any of his predecessors, was, no doubt, owing partly to the unhesitating and unqualified determination which regulated his conduct, of devoting his whole patronage to the support of his party, and to the extent of that patronage, from his being so long minister for

India, as well as having the whole Scottish preferment at his absolute disposal; but it was also in part owing to the engaging qualities of the man. A steady and determined friend, who only stood the faster by those that wanted him the more; nay, who even in their errors or their faults would not give up his adherents: an agreeable companion, from the joyous hilarity of his manners; void of all affectation, all pride, all pretension; a kind and affectionate man in the relations of private life; and although not always sufficiently regardful of strict decorum in certain particulars, yet never putting on the Pharisee's garb, or affecting a more "gracious state" than he had attained; friendly, self-denying to those inferiors in his department whose comforts so much depended upon him; in his demeanour hearty and good-humoured to all—it is difficult to figure any one more calculated to win over those whom his mere power and station had failed to attach; or better fitted to retain the friends whom accident or influence might originally have attached to his person. That he should for so many years have disposed of the votes in Parliament of nearly the whole Scottish commoners, and the whole Peers, was, therefore, little to be wondered at; that his popularity and influence in the country at large should have been boundless during all this period, is as easily to be understood. There was then no doubt ever raised of the ministry's stability, or of Mr. Dundas's ample share in the dispensation of its favours. The political sky was clear and settled to the very verge of the horizon. There was nothing to disturb the hearts of anxious mortals. The wary and pensive Scot felt sure of his election, if he but kept by

the true faith; and his path lay straight before him—the path of righteous devotion leading unto a blessed preferment. But our Northern countrymen were fated to be visited by some troubles. The heavens became overcast; their luminary was for a while concealed from devout eyes; in vain they sought him, but he was not. Uncouth names began to be named. More than two parties were talked of. Instead of the old, convenient, and intelligible alternative of “Pitt or Fox”—“place or poverty,”—which left no doubt in any rational mind which of the two to choose, there was seen—strange sight!—hateful and perplexing omen!—a Ministry without Pitt, nay, without Dundas, and an Opposition leaning towards its support. Those who are old enough to remember that dark interval, may recollect how the public mind in Scotland was subdued with awe, and how men awaited in trembling silence the uncertain event, as all living things quail during the solemn pause that precedes an earthquake.

It was in truth a crisis to try men’s souls. For a while all was uncertainty and consternation; all were seen fluttering about like birds in an eclipse or a thunder-storm; no man could tell whom he might trust; nay, worse still, no man could tell of whom he might ask any thing. It was hard to say, not who were in office, but who were likely to remain in office. All true Scots were in dismay and distraction. It might truly be said they knew not which way to look, or whither to turn. Perhaps it might be yet more truly said, that they knew not *when* to turn. But such a crisis was too sharp to last; it passed away; and then was to be seen a proof of Mr. Dundas’s power

amongst his countrymen, which transcended all expectation, and almost surpassed belief, if indeed it is not rather to be viewed as an evidence of the acute foresight—the political second-sight—of the Scottish nation. The trusty band in both Houses actually were found adhering to him against the existing Government; nay, he held the proxies of many Scottish Peers in open opposition! Well might his colleague exclaim to the hapless Addington in such unheard-of troubles, “Doctor, the Thanes fly from us!” When the very Scotch Peers wavered, and when the Grampian hills might next be expected to move about, it was time to think that the end of all things was at hand; and the return of Pitt and security, and patronage and Dundas, speedily ensued to bless old Scotland, and reward her providence or her fidelity—her attachment at once to her patron, and to herself.

The subject of Lord Melville cannot be left complete without some mention of the event which finally deprived him of place and of power, though it hardly ever lowered him in the respect and affections of his countrymen. We allude, of course, to the Resolutions carried by Mr. Whitbread on the 8th of April, 1805, with the Speaker’s casting voice, which led to the immediate resignation, and subsequent impeachment of this distinguished person. Mr. Pitt defended him strenuously, and only was compelled to abandon his friend and colleague, by the vote of the Commons, which gave him a “bitter pang,” that as he pronounced the word made the hall resound, and seems yet to fill the ear. But after his death, while the Government was in his rival’s hands, and all the offices of

the State were filled with the enemies of the accused, Lord Melville was brought to trial before his Peers, and by a large majority acquitted, to the almost universal satisfaction of the country. Have we any right to regard him as guilty after this proceeding? It is true that the spirit of party is charged with the event of this memorable trial; but did nothing of that spirit preside over the proceedings in the Commons, the grand inquest of the nation, which made the presentment, and put the accused upon his trial? That Lord Melville was a careless man and wholly indifferent about money, his whole life had shown. That he had replaced the entire sum temporarily used, was part even of the statement which charged him with misemploying it. That Mr. Pitt, whom no one ever accused of corruption, had been a party to two of his supporters using four times as much of the public money for a time, and without paying interest, was soon after proved; though for the purpose of pressing more severely upon Lord Melville, a great alacrity was shown to acquit the Prime Minister, by way of forming contrast to the Treasurer of the Navy. In a word, the case proved against him was not by any means so clear as to give us the right to charge the great majority of his Peers with corrupt and dishonourable conduct in acquitting him; while it is a known fact that the Judges who attended the trial were, with the exception of the Lord Chief Justice, all clearly convinced of his innocence. Nor, let it be added, would the charge against him have been deemed, in the times of the Harleys and the Walpoles, of a nature to stain his character. Witness Walpole rising to supreme power

after being expelled the House of Commons for corruption; and after having only urged in his own defence, that the thousand pounds paid to him by a contractor had been for the use of a friend, whom he desired to favour, and to whom he had paid it all over; not to mention his having received above seventeen thousand pounds, under circumstances of the gravest suspicion the day before he quitted office, and which he never seems to have accounted for, except by saying he had the King's authority to take it.* It is very

* Mr. Coxe, in his life of Walpole, cannot, of course, put the defence on higher ground than Walpole himself took, as to the 1000*l.* received on the contract, in 1711, when he was Secretary at War. As to the sum reported by the House of Commons' Committee (17,461*l.*) to have been obtained by him in 1712, on the authority of two Treasury orders, the biographer's main argument is, that the money must have been immediately wanted for the public purposes, though these never were particularised, and that the King must have approved of the draft, because he signed the warrants. A weaker defence cannot well be conceived; nor is it much aided by the assertion which follows, that Sir Robert began writing a vindication of himself, which he broke off "on a conviction that his answer must either have been materially defective, or he must have related many things highly improper to be exposed to the public." The fact of a man, with an estate of about 2000*l.* a-year at first, and which never rose to much above 4000*l.*, having lived extravagantly, and amassed above 200,000*l.*, is not at all explained by Mr. Coxe; and it is mainly on this expensive living and accumulation of fortune, that the suspicions which hang over his memory rest. But it is needless to say more upon a topic which could form no justification of Lord Melville, if he were guilty. The subject is only alluded to in this place for the purpose of showing how much more pure our public men now are, and how much higher is our standard of official virtue. The acquittal of Lord Melville was deemed insufficient to sanction his restoration

certain that these remarks will give little satisfaction to those whose political principles have always kept them apart from, and inimical to Lord Melville. But to what purpose have men lived for above thirty years after the trial, and survived the object of the charge more than a quarter of a century, if they cannot now, and upon a mere judicial question, permit their judgments to have a free scope,—deciding calmly upon events that belong to the history of the past, and involve the reputation of the dead?

to office; although Sir Robert Walpole, without any attempt to rescind the vote of 1712, was afterwards advanced to the place of Prime Minister, and held it for twenty years.



MR. ERSKINE.

MR. ERSKINE.

THE Ministry of Mr. Pitt did not derive more solid service from the Bar in the person of Mr. Dundas, than the Opposition party did ornament and popularity in that of Mr. Erskine. His Parliamentary talents, although they certainly have been underrated, were as clearly not the prominent portion of his character. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that, had he appeared in any other period than the age of the Foxes, the Pitts, and the Burkes, there is little chance that he would have been eclipsed even as a debater; and the singular eloquence and powerful effect of his famous speech against the Jesuits' Bark Bill in the House of Lords* abundantly proves this position. He never appears to have given his whole mind to the practice of debating; he had a very scanty provision of political information; his time was always occupied with the laborious pursuits of his profession; he came into the House of Commons, where he stood among several equals, and behind some superiors from a stage where he shone alone, and without a rival; above all, he was accustomed to address a select and friendly audience, bound to lend him their patient attention, and to address them by the compulsion of his retainer, not as a volunteer coming forward in his own person; a position from which the transition is violent and extreme, to that of having to gain and to keep a promiscu-

* 1808.

ous and, in great part, hostile audience, not under any obligation to listen one instant beyond the time during which the speaker can flatter, or interest, or amuse them. Earlier practice and more devotion to the pursuit, would doubtless have vanquished all these disadvantages; but they sufficed to keep Mr. Erskine always in a station far beneath his talents, as long as he remained in the House of Commons.

It is to the Forum, and not the Senate, that we must hasten, if we would witness the "*coronam multiplicem, judicium erectum, crebras assensiones, multas admirationes, risum cum velit, cum velit fletum, in Scenâ Roscium*;" in fine, if we should see this great man in his element and in his glory. Nor let it be deemed trivial, or beneath the historian's province, to mark that noble figure, every look of whose countenance is expressive, every motion of whose form graceful; an eye that sparkles and pierces, and almost assures victory, while it "speaks audience ere the tongue." Juries have declared that they felt it impossible to remove their looks from him when he had riveted and, as it were, fascinated them by his first glance; and it used to be a common remark of men who observed his motions, that they resembled those of a blood-horse; as light, as limber, as much betokening strength and speed, as free from all gross superfluity or incumbrance. Then hear his voice of surpassing sweetness, clear, flexible, strong, exquisitely fitted to strains of serious earnestness, deficient in compass, indeed, and much less fitted to express indignation or even scorn than pathos, but wholly free from either harshness or monotony. All these, however, and even his chaste, dignified, and appropriate action,

were very small parts of this wonderful advocate's excellence. He had a thorough knowledge of men—of their passions and their feelings—he knew every avenue to the heart, and could at will make all its chords vibrate to his touch. His fancy, though never playful in public, where he had his whole faculties under the most severe control, was lively and brilliant; when he gave it vent and scope, it was eminently sportive; but while representing his client, it was wholly subservient to that in which his whole soul was wrapped up, and to which each faculty of body and of mind was subdued, the success of the cause. His argumentative powers were of the highest order; clear in his statements, close in his applications, unwearied and never to be diverted in his deductions; with a quick and sure perception of his point, and undeviating in the pursuit of whatever established it; endued with a nice discernment of the relative importance and weight of different arguments, and the faculty of assigning to each its proper place, so as to bring forward the main body of the reasoning in bold relief, and with its full breadth, and not weaken its effect by distracting and disturbing the attention of the audience among lesser particulars. His understanding was eminently legal; though he had never made himself a great lawyer, yet could he conduct a purely legal argument with the most perfect success; and his familiarity with all the ordinary matters of his profession was abundantly sufficient for the purposes of the forum. His memory was accurate and retentive in an extraordinary degree; nor did he ever, during the trial of a cause, forget any matter, how trifling soever, that belonged to it. His presence of mind was

perfect in action, that is, before the jury, when a line is to be taken upon the instant, and a question risked to a witness, or a topic chosen with the tribunal, on which the whole fate of the cause may turn. No man made fewer mistakes; none left so few advantages unimproved; before none was it so dangerous for an adversary to slumber and be off his guard; for he was ever broad awake himself, and was as adventurous as he was skilful; and as apt to take advantage of any the least opening, as he was cautious to leave none in his own battle.

But to all these qualities he joined that fire, that spirit, that courage, which gave vigour and direction to the whole, and bore down all resistance. No man, with all his address and prudence, ever ventured upon more bold figures, and they were uniformly successful; for his imagination was vigorous enough to sustain any flight; his taste was correct, and even severe, and his execution felicitous in the highest degree. Without much familiar knowledge of even the Latin classics; with hardly any access to the beauties of the Attic eloquence, whether in prose or verse; with no skill in modern languages, his acquaintance with the English tongue was yet so perfect, and his taste so exquisite, that nothing could exceed the beauty of his diction, whatever subject he attempted; whether discoursing on the most humble topics, of the most ordinary case in court or in society, or defending men for their lives, under the persecution of tyrannical power, wrestling against the usurpations of Parliament in favour of the liberty of the press, and upholding against the assaults of the infidel the fabric of revealed

religion. Indeed the beauty, as well as chaste simplicity, of the language in which he would clothe the most lowly subjects reminded the classical scholar of some narratives in the *Odyssey*, where there is not one idea that rises above the meanest level, and yet all is made graceful and elegant by the magic of the diction. Aware that his classical acquirements were so slender, men oftentimes marvelled at the phenomenon of his eloquence, above all, of his composition. The solution of the difficulty lay in the constant reading of the old English authors to which he devoted himself: *Shakespeare* he was more familiar with than almost any man of his age; and *Milton* he nearly had by heart. Nor can it be denied that the study of the speeches in "*Paradise Lost*," is as good a substitute as can be found for the immortal originals in the Greek models, upon which those great productions have manifestly been formed.

Such was his oratory; but oratory is only the half, and the lesser half of the *Nisi Prius* advocate; and Mr. Erskine never was known to fail in the more important moiety of the part he had to sustain. The entire devotion to his cause which made him reject every thing that did not help it forward, and indignantly scorn all temptations to sacrifice its smallest point for any rhetorical triumph, was not the only virtue of his advocacy. His judgment was quick, sound, and sure, upon each successive step to be taken; his decision bold, but cautions and enlightened, at each turn. His speaking was hardly more perfect than his examination of witnesses, the art in which so much of an English advocate's skill is shown; and his examination-in-chief

was as excellent as his cross-examination; a department so apt to deceive the vulgar, and which yet is, generally speaking, far less available, as it hardly ever is more difficult than the examination-in-chief, or in reply. In all these various functions, whether of addressing the jury, or urging objections to the court, or examining his own witnesses, or cross-examining his adversary's, this consummate advocate appeared to fill at one and the same time different characters; to act as the counsel and representative of the party, and yet to be the very party himself; while he addressed the tribunal, to be also acquainted with every feeling and thought of the judge or the jury; while he interrogated the witness, whether to draw from him all he knew and in the most favourable shape, or to shake and displace all he had said that was adverse, he appeared to have entered into the mind of the person he was dealing with, and to be familiar with all that was passing within it. It is by such means that the hearer is to be moved, and the truth ascertained; and he will ever be the most successful advocate who can approach the nearest to this lofty and difficult position.

The speeches of this great man are preserved to us with a care and correctness which those only of Mr. Burke, Mr. Windham, Mr. Canning, and Lord Dudley, among all the orators of whom this work treats, can boast. He had a great facility of composition; he wrote both much and correctly. The five volumes which remain were all revised by himself; most of them at the several times of their first publication. Mr. Windham, too, is known to have left most of his speeches written out correctly in his own hand. The same care was bestowed

upon their speeches by the others just named. Neither those of Mr. Fox or Mr. Pitt, nor, with one or two exceptions, of Mr. Sheridan, ever enjoyed the same advantages; and a most unfair estimate would therefore be formed of their eloquence, as compared with that of others, were men only to build their judgment upon the records which the Parliamentary Debates present.

Of Mr. Erskine's the first, beyond all doubt, was his speech for Stockdale, foolishly and oppressively prosecuted by the House of Commons, for publishing the Reverend Mr. Logan's eloquent tract upon Hastings's impeachment. There are no finer things in modern, and few finer in ancient eloquence than the celebrated passage of the Indian Chief; nor has beautiful language ever been used with more curious felicity to raise a striking and an appropriate image before the mind, than in the simile of the winds "lashing before them the lazy elements, which without the tempest would stagnate into pestilence." The speeches on Constructive Treason are also noble performances; in which the reader never can forget the sublimity of the denunciation against those who took from the "file the sentence against Sidney, which should have been left on record to all ages, that it might arise and blacken in the sight, like the handwriting on the wall before the Eastern tyrant, to deter from outrages upon justice." One or two of the speeches upon Seduction, especially that for the defendant in *Howard v. Bingham*, are of exquisite beauty.

It remains that we commemorate the deeds which he did, and which cast the fame of his oratory into the shade. He was an undaunted man; he was an undaunted advocate. To no Court did he ever truckle, neither to

the Court of the King, neither to the Court of the King's Judges. Their smiles and their frowns he disregarded alike in the fearless discharge of his duty. He upheld the liberty of the press against the one ; he defended the rights of the people against both combined to destroy them. If there be yet amongst us the power of freely discussing the acts of our rulers ; if there be yet the privilege of meeting for the promotion of needful reforms ; if he who desires wholesome changes in our Constitution be still recognised as a patriot, and not doomed to die the death of a traitor ; let us acknowledge with gratitude, that to this great man, under Heaven, we owe this felicity of the times. In 1794, his dauntless energy, his indomitable courage, kindling his eloquence, inspiring his conduct, giving direction and lending firmness to his matchless skill, resisted the combination of statesmen, and princes, and lawyers—the league of cruelty and craft, formed to destroy our liberties—and triumphantly scattered to the winds the half-accomplished scheme of an unsparing proscription. Before such a precious service as this, well may the lustre of statesmen and of orators grow pale ; and yet this was the achievement of one only not the first orator of his age, and not among its foremost statesmen, because he was beyond all comparison the most accomplished advocate, and the most eloquent, that modern times have produced.

The disposition and manners of the man were hardly less attractive than his genius and his professional skill were admirable. He was, like almost all great men, simple, natural, and amiable ; full of humane feelings and kindly affections. Of wit, he had little or none in conversation ; and he was too gay to take any delight in

discussion; but his humour was playful to buoyancy, and wild even to extravagance; and he indulged his roaming and devious and abrupt imagination as much in society, as in public he kept it under rigorous control. That his private character was exempt from failings can in no wise be affirmed. The egotism which was charged upon his conversation, and in which he only seemed to adopt the habit of the forensic leaders of his times, was wholly unmixed with any thing offensive to others; though it might excite a smile at his own expense. Far from seeking to raise himself by their depression, his vanity was of the best-natured and least selfish kind; it was wholly social and tolerant, and, as it were, gregarious; nay, he always seemed to extol the deeds of others with fully more enthusiasm than he ever displayed in recounting his own. But there were darker places to be marked, in the extreme imprudence with which some indulgences were sought, and unfortunate connexions, even late in life, formed. Lord Kenyon, who admired and loved him fervently, and used always to appear as vain of him as a schoolmaster of his favourite pupil, though himself rigorous to the point of ascetism, was wont to call these imperfections, viewing them tolerantly, "spots in the sun;" and it must with sorrow be added, that as the lustre of the luminary became more dim, the spots did not contract in their dimensions. The usual course on such occasions is to say, *Taceamus de his*,—but History neither asserts her greatest privilege, nor discharges her higher duties, when, dazzled by brilliant genius, or astonished by splendid triumphs, or even softened by amiable qualities, she abstains from marking those defects which so often degrade the most ster-

ling worth, and which the talents and the affections that they accompany may sometimes seduce men to imitate.

The striking and imposing appearance of this great man's person has been mentioned. His Herculean strength of constitution may also be noted. During the eight-and-twenty years that he practised at the bar, he never was prevented for one hour from attending to his professional duties. At the famous State Trials in 1794, he lost his voice on the evening before he was to address the Jury. It returned to him just in time, and this, like other felicities of his career, he always ascribed to a special providence, with the habitually religious disposition of mind which was hereditary in the godly families that he sprung from.

MR. PERCEVAL.

MR. PERCEVAL.

A PERSON of great eminence, who, like Mr. Erskine, arose from the Bar, where, however, he never distinguished himself much, was Mr. Perceval, a man of very quick parts, much energy of character, dauntless courage, joined to patient industry, practised fluency as a speaker, great skill and readiness as a debater; but of no information beyond what a classical education gives the common run of English youths. Of views upon all things the most narrow, upon religious and even political questions the most bigoted and intolerant, his range of mental vision was confined in proportion to his ignorance on all general subjects. Within that sphere he saw with extreme acuteness,—as the mole is supposed to be more sharp-sighted than the eagle for half a quarter of an inch before it; but as beyond the limits of his little horizon he saw no better than the mole, so like her, he firmly believed, and always acted on the belief, that beyond what he could descry nothing whatever existed; and he mistrusted, dreaded, and even hated all who had an ampler visual range than himself. But here, unhappily, all likeness cease between the puny animal and the powerful statesman. Beside the manifest sincerity of his convictions, attested, perhaps, by his violence and rancour, he possessed many qualities, both of the head and the heart, which strongly recommended him to the confidence of

the English people. He never scared them by refinements, nor alarmed their fears by any sympathy with improvements out of the old and beaten track; and he shared largely in all their favourite national prejudices. A devoted adherent of the Crown, and a pious son of the Church, he was dear to all who celebrate their revels by libations to Church and King—most of whom regard the clergy as of far more importance than the gospel—all of whom are well enough disposed to set the monarch above the law. Add to this, the accidental qualifications of high birth, in a family excessively attached to the Court and the Establishment, and still more the real virtues which adorned his character; a domestic life without stain, an exemplary discharge of the duties that devolve on the father of a numerous family, a punctual performance of all his obligations, a temper which, though quick and even irritable, was generally good, a disposition charitable and kind where the rancour of party or sect left his nature free scope. From all sordid feeling he was entirely exempt—regardless of pecuniary interest—careless of mere fortune—aiming at power alone—and only suffering his ambition to be restrained by its intermixture with his fiery zeal for the success of his cherished principles, religious and civil. The whole character thus formed, whether intellectual or moral, was eminently fitted to command the respect and win the favour of a nation whose prejudices are numerous and deep-rooted, and whose regard for the decencies of private life readily accepts a strict observance of them as a substitute for almost any political defect, and a compensation for many political crimes.

The eloquence of Mr. Perceval, any more than his capacity, was not of the highest order; although, like his capacity, it was always strenuously exerted, and sometimes extremely powerful. He was a person of acute and quick rather than of great faculties. At the bar his success was assured, if he had not deviated into politics; giving a rival to that mistress which is jealous to excess of the least infidelity in her suitor. The nimbleness of mind and industry of application which then distinguished him he brought into the House of Commons, and differing from other lawyers, he was always so lively as to be heard without any effort in a place far enough from being enamoured with the gown. As Attorney-General to Mr. Addington, and bearing almost the whole burden of the unequal debate, while the forces of Fox, Pitt, and Windham combined to assail the meagre Treasury Bench, his talents sparkled with peculiar brightness. His dexterity in any great or any personal conflict; his excellent language, always purely but unaffectedly English, nor ever chargeable with incorrect taste; his attention constantly awake, and his spirit ever dauntless, nay, rather rising with the emergency—gained him the greatest reputation as a ready and a powerful debater. When quitting the profession in 1807, and taking the lead of the House of Commons, he appeared as the first minister in all but name, and afterwards on the Duke of Portland's death, had the title with the functions of Premier, his success was inferior; and he did not for some time act up to the reputation which he had gained in the subordinate and half-professional station.

But the debates upon the Regency in 1811, when he

fought, almost single-handed, a battle for royal prerogative against constitutional principle; with the prospect of the Regent being his principal opponent, as his original connexion with Queen Caroline had made him his implacable enemy—these contests drew forth all his abilities, and placed him at once in the highest rank of debaters. His party too were popular in the country, fond of Kings, particularly attached to George III., distrustful and averse towards his successor, above all, deeply revering the Established Church, whose selected and zealous champion, the minister had long been. His manner of speaking, familiar though quick, lively, smart, yet plain upon the whole, and offending no one by figures or by tropes, was exceedingly popular in the House of Commons, where the dullest have no dislike to an acute and clear leader, so he be not over brilliant and witty. He was a man of business too, in all his habits both of living and of speaking; opening a dry question of finance or regulation, with as great spirit as he would reply to a personal attack: above all, his gallantry in debate well fitted him for a leader. Whoever might quail before a powerful adversary, or faint under the pressure of a bad cause, or take fright in a storm of popular contention and even indignation, he was none of these; rather the louder raged the tempest, so much the shriller rose the voice that called his forces together, and united them for the work of the day, whether to face the enemy or to weather the gale. Even in 1809, when the firmness of the Royal family and the Ministry was sorely tried,—but above all, of him, a pattern of morality, a strict observer of ordinances, a somewhat intolerant exacter of piety in others, of him who, beyond all men, must have

found it hard to face the moral or religious indignation of the whole country, roused by the veil being for a moment torn rudely aside which had hitherto covered over the tender immoralities of Royal life—even then the person most likely to be struck down by the blast, was the first to face it, and to struggle on manfully through the whole of that difficult crisis, as if he had never spoken of the Church, and the moral law, and wives, and children, and domestic ties, and the profligacy of courts,—as if the people, of all sects and all classes, were looking on, the calm spectators of an ordinary debate. The public voice rendered him on this occasion the justice ever done to men who show in performing their duty that they have the courage to disregard clamour, and to rely upon their reputation as a shield against misconstruction. No stain rested upon his character from his gallant defence of the Duke of York; and they who were successful in attacking the fair fame of the Prince, failed in all their attempts to blacken his official defender. In the next Session, he met Parliament with a Ministry crippled by the loss of both Mr. Canning's eloquence, and Lord Castlereagh's manly courage, and long experience of affairs,—met it too, after such a signal calamity as never before had attended any failure of the Government in its military operations. But he again presented the same undaunted front to all perils; and having happily obtained the co-operation of Lord Wellesley, and continuing to enjoy the benefit of his illustrious brother's victories, he again triumphed over all opposition, until the Prince Regent's desertion of his friends seemed to give the Tory party a lease of their places during his life.

This eminent person's career was cut short while in the midst of the most difficult struggle of all in which he was fated to engage. The influence of his friend Mr. Stephen over his mind was unbounded. Agreeing on all political questions, and alike in the strength of their religious feelings, although the one leant towards the High Church party, and the other was a Low Churchman, upon all questions connected with neutral rights, he in an especial manner deferred to the opinion of him whose professional life had been chiefly passed in the discussion of them. Accordingly the measure of the Orders in Council devised by him was readily adopted by the minister, who, never giving either his support or his opposition by halves, always flung himself into any cause which he espoused with as much zeal as if it were his own. Add to this, his hearty and deep-rooted hatred of Napoleon, whom he regarded with the true feelings of the people, as he accurately represented their national prejudices—his scorn of the Americans, whom he disliked with the animosity peculiar to all the courtiers of George III.—his truly English feeling in favour of obtaining through the war a monopoly of all trade, and bringing into London and Bristol the commerce of the world—all these desires were gratified, and these feelings, indulged by a system which, under the mask of retaliation upon France, professed to extinguish, or to absorb into our own commerce, the trade of all the neutrals whom France had oppressed in order to injure us; and Mr. Perceval thus became as strenuous a champion of this unjust and preposterous plan as its author himself. In 1808 he had prevailed with parliament to give it a full trial; and in four years, instead

of collecting all the trade of the world into England, it had effectually ruined whatever Napoleon's measures had left of our own.

Accordingly, a motion was carried at the end of April, 1812, for examining the question in a committee of the whole house, and in taking the evidence which was adduced to show the ruinous effects of the system, he with Mr. Stephen bore night after night the principal part. As they both hoped that the clamour out of doors would subside if time were given, the struggle always was to put off the inquiry, and thus to protract the decision; and Messrs. Brougham and Baring, who conducted it, with some difficulty prevailed so far as to begin the examination of the witnesses exactly at half-past four o'clock. On the 11th of May, Mr. Perceval had been later than the appointed time, and after complaining of this delay, Mr. Brougham, at a quarter before five, had called his first witness, and was examining him, when a messenger deputed to bring the minister, met him walking towards the House with Mr. Stephen arm-in-arm. He instantly, with his accustomed activity, darted forward to obey the summons, but for which Mr. Stephen, who happened to be on his left side, would have been the victim of the assassin's blow, which prostrated Mr. Perceval as he entered the lobby. The wretched man, by name Bellingham, had no kind of quarrel with him; but complained of a suit at St. Petersburg having been neglected by our ambassador there, Lord Granville, whom he intended to have destroyed had not Mr. Perceval fallen first in his way. He never attempted to escape; but was taken, committed, tried, condemned, executed, dissected, all within one week from the time that he fired the shot.

A great and outrageous wrong upon justice never was witnessed in modern times: for the application to delay the trial, and the evidence of his insanity could be brought from the subject, was refused, and the trial proceeded, while all the court, the witnesses, the jury, and the people, were under the influence of the feelings naturally excited by the deplorable slaughter of one of the most eminent and virtuous men in any rank of the community.

It has been said already that Mr. Perceval was both exceedingly educated and very narrow minded. He was the slave of violent prejudices, and had never made any attempt to shake them off, or to mitigate them by instructing himself in any of the branches of learning out of his own profession, save only that he had the ordinary portion of classical learning which all English gentlemen acquire in their early youth. How amiable soever in private life, he was intolerant of others who differed with him in the proportion of his ignorance, and committed the error of all such conscientious but bigoted men, the supposing that those of opposite sentiments have exactly the same excuse for unyielding obstinacy that they have a just dislike towards adverse doctrines. They feel at the heat of intolerance, but make no kind of allowance to others feeling somewhat of the fire which burns so secretly within themselves.

LORD GRENVILLE.

LORD GRENVILLE.

THE two eminent personages of whom we have been speaking, were Mr. Pitt's contemporaries and political adherents, though of a less advanced age. But Lord Grenville was of his own standing, followed his fortune during the eventful period of the coalesced opposition and the first French war, left office with him in 1801, nor quitted him until he consented to resume it in 1804, preferring place to character, and leaving the Whigs, by whose help he had overthrown the Addington Administration. From that moment Lord Grenville joined the Whig party, with whom to the end of his public life he continued to act.

A greater accession to the popular cause and the Whig party it was impossible to imagine, unless Mr. Pitt himself had persevered in his desire of rejoining the standard under which his first and noblest battles were fought. All the qualities in which their long opposition and personal habits made them deficient, Lord Grenville possessed in an eminent degree; long habits of business had matured his experience and disciplined his naturally vigorous understanding; a life studiously regular had surrounded him with the respect of his countrymen, and of those whom the dazzling talents of others could not blind to their loose propensities or idle talents; a firm attachment to the Church as by law established attracted towards him the confi-

dence of those who subscribe to its doctrines and approve its discipline; while his tried prudence and discretion were a balance much wanted against the opposite defects of the Whig party, and especially of their most celebrated leader.

After Mr. Grattan, it would be difficult to point out any person to whom the great and fundamental question of Irish Policy, and the cause of religious liberty in general, was so much indebted as Lord Grenville;* while in the sacrifices which he made to it, he certainly much exceeded Mr. Grattan himself. He was enabled to render this valuable service to his country, not more by his natural abilities, which were of a very high order—sound judgment, extraordinary memory, an almost preternatural power of application—and by the rich stores of knowledge which those eminent qualities had put him in possession of, than by the accidental circumstances in his previous history and present position—his long experience in office, which had tried and matured his talents in times of unexampled difficulty—his

* The plan of this work of course precludes all reference, at least all detailed reference, to the conduct and the merits of living statesmen. But for this an ample field would be opened, in which to expatiate upon the transcendent services of Lord Grey, and the ample sacrifices which he made, during the greater part of his political life, to the rights and the interests of the Irish people. Lord Wellesley's services in the same cause, it is also for the same reason, impossible to enter upon, further than to remind the reader that, after having almost begun life as the advocate of the Catholic claims, he, and after him Lord Anglesey, first set the example to succeeding Viceroy's of ruling Ireland with the most perfect justice to all parties, and holding the balance of favour even, with a steady hand, between Catholic and Protestant, Churchman and Dissenter.

connexion with Mr. Pitt, both in the kindred of blood and of place, so well fitted to conciliate the Tory party, or at all events to disarm their hostility, and lull their suspicions—above all, the well-known and steady attachment of himself and his family to the principles and the establishment of the Church of England.

When, therefore, he quitted power with Mr. Pitt in 1801, rather than abandon the Catholic Emancipation, the carrying of which had only a year before been held out as one of the principal objects of the Union; and when, in 1804, he peremptorily refused to join Mr. Pitt in resuming office, unless a ministry should be formed upon a basis wide enough to comprehend the Whig party; the cause of liberal, tolerant principles, but, above all, the Irish question, gained an able supporter, whose alliance, whether his intrinsic or accidental qualities were considered, might justly be esteemed beyond all price. The friends of civil and religious liberty duly valued this most important accession; and the distinguished statesmen whom they now accounted as one of their most powerful champions, and trusted as one of their most worthy leaders, amply repaid the confidence reposed in him, by the steady and disinterested devotion which, with his characteristic integrity and firmness, he gave to the cause. Taking office with Mr. Fox, and placed at the head of the government, upon the death of that great man he peremptorily, and with bare courtesy, rejected all the overtures of the King to separate from the Whigs, and rejoin his ancient allies of the Pitt school. Soon afterwards, in firm union with the remains of the Fox party, he carried the Abolition of the Slave Trade, and retired from power, rather than bind himself

not to press the Catholic Emancipation upon the narrow-minded though conscientious Prince whom he served. Continuing in close alliance with the Whigs, he shared with them the frowns of the Court and the habitual exclusion from office which has, for the most part, been their portion in public life. Nor can it be doubted that the perseverance with which he abided by his declared opinions in favour of the Catholic Question alone prevented him from presiding over the councils of his country, during, at the least, twenty years of his life. They who have come to the aid of the liberal cause only when its success made an adhesion to it the road to Court favour, with all its accompaniments of profit and of power, have a very different account of mutual obligation to settle with their country, from that which Lord Grenville could at any time since his retirement have presented, but disdained ever even to hint at. But they who, after his powerful advocacy, his inflexible integrity, his heavy sacrifices, had all but carried the Irish question, have come forward to finish the good work, and have reaped every kind of gratification from doing their duty, instead of making a sacrifice of their interests like him, would do well, while they usurp all the glory of these successes, to recollect the men whose labours, requited with proscription, led the way to comparatively insignificant exertions, still more beneficial to the individuals that made them, than advantageous to the cause they served.

The endowments of this eminent statesman's mind were all of a useful and commanding sort—sound sense, steady memory, vast industry. His acquirements were in the same proportion valuable and lasting—a thorough

acquaintance with business in its principles and in its details ; a complete mastery of the science of politics, as well theoretical as practical ; of late years a perfect familiarity with political economy, and a just appreciation of its importance ; an early and most extensive knowledge of classical literature, which he improved instead of abandoning, down to the close of his life ; a taste formed upon those chaste models, and of which his lighter compositions, his Greek and Latin verses, bore testimony to the very last. His eloquence was of a plain, masculine, authoritative cast, which neglected if it did not despise ornament, and partook in the least possible degree of fancy, while its declamation was often equally powerful with its reasoning and its statement.

The faults of his character were akin to some of the excellencies which so greatly distinguished it ; his firmness was apt to degenerate into obstinacy ; his confidence in the principles he held was not unmixed with contempt for those who differed from him. His unbending honesty and straightforward course of dealing with all men and all subjects not unfrequently led him to neglect those courtesies which facilitate political and personal intercourse, and that spirit of conciliation which, especially in a mixed government chiefly conducted by party, sometimes enables men to win a way which they cannot force towards the attainment of important objects. Perhaps his most unfortunate prejudices were those which he had early imbibed upon certain matters of Ecclesiastical Polity, and which the accidental circumstances of his connexion with Oxford as Chancellor strengthened to the exclusion of the reforming spirit carried by him into all institutions of a

merely secular kind. Upon the Parliamentary constitution of the country he had no such alarms or scruples; and, although it is certain that he would have reformed it much more gradually than the long delay of the great measure rendered ultimately necessary, it is equally clear that he would have stopped short of no improvement which could be reasonably required, merely because it was a change. For he was in this greatest quality of a statesman pre-eminently distinguished, that, as he neither would yield up his judgment to the clamours of the people, nor suffer himself to be seduced by the influence of the Court, so would he never submit his reason to the empire of prejudice, or own the supremacy of authority and tradition. "Reliqui sunt, qui mortui sunt—L. Torquatus, quem tu non tam cito rhetorem dixisses, etsi non deerat oratio, quam, ut Græci dicunt *πολιτικός*. Erant in eo plurimæ litteræ, nec eæ vulgares, sed interiores quædam et reconditæ, divina memoria, summa verborum et gravitas et elegantia: atque hæc omnia vitæ decorabat dignitas et integritas. Plena litteratæ senectutis oratio. Quanta severitas in vultu! Quantum pondus in verbis! Quam nihil non consideratum exibat ex ore! Silamus de isto, ne augeamus dolorem. Nam et præteritorum recordatio est acerba, et acerbior expectatio reliquorum,"*

* Cicero, Brutus, 266.

MR. GRATTAN.



MR. GRATTAN.

THE name which we mentioned as superior to even Lord Grenville in services to the Irish question, recalls to mind one of the greatest men of his age—Henry Grattan.

It would not be easy to point out any statesman or patriot, in any age of the world, whose fame stands higher for his public services ; nor is it possible to name any one, the purity of whose reputation has been stained by so few faults, and the lustre of whose renown is dimmed by so few imperfections. From the earliest years at which he could appear upon the political stage, he devoted himself to state affairs. While yet in the prime of youth, he had achieved a victory which stands at the head of all the triumphs ever won by a patriot for his country in modern times ; he had effected an important revolution in the Government, without violence of any kind, and had broken chains of the most degrading kind, by which the injustice and usurpation of three centuries had bound her down. Her immediate gratitude placed him in a situation of independence, which enabled him to consecrate the remainder of his days to her service, without the interruption arising from professional pursuits ; and he continued to persevere in the same course of patriotism marked by a rare union of the moderation which springs from combined wisdom and virtue, with the firmness and the zeal which are peculiar to genius.

No factious partisan, making devotion to the public cause a convenient and a safe mask for the attainment of his selfish interests, whether of sordid avarice or of crawling ambition, ever found in Grattan either an instrument or an accomplice. No true friend of the people, inspired with a generous desire of extirpating abuses, and of extending the reign of freedom, ever complained of Grattan's slowness to join the untarnished banner of patriotism. No advocate of human improvement, filled with the sacred zeal of enlarging the enjoyments or elevating the condition of mankind, was ever damped in his aspirations by Grattan's coldness, or had reason to wish him less the advocate of Ireland and more the friend of his species.

The principal battle which he fought for his native country required him to embrace every great and difficult question of domestic policy; for the misrule and oppression exercised by England over the Irish people extended to all their commercial dealings, as well as to their political rights, and sought to fetter their trade by a complicated system of vexatious regulations, as well as to awe their legislators by an assumption of sovereignty, and to impose the fetters of a foreign jurisdiction upon the administration of justice itself. In no part of this vast and various field were Mr. Grattan's powers found to fail or his acquirements to prove deficient; and he handled the details of fiscal and of mercantile policy with as much accuracy and as great address as he brought to the discussion of the broader and easier though more momentous subject—the great question of National Independence. He was left, on the achievement of his great triumph, in possession of as brilliant

a reputation as a man could desire ; and it was unsullied by any one act either of factious violence, or of personal meanness, or the inconsistency into which overmuch vehemence in the pursuit of praiseworthy objects is wont to betray even the most virtuous men. The popular favour which he enjoyed to so unexampled a degree, and in such unmeasured profusion, was in a short time destined to suffer an interruption, not unusual in the history of popular leaders; and for refusing to join in the designs, of a more than doubtful origin, of men inferior in reputation of every kind, and of a more than doubtful honesty—men who proscribed as unworthy of the people's esteem all that acknowledge any restraints of moderation—he lived to see himself denounced by the factious, reviled by the unprincipled, and abandoned by their dupes, the bulk of the very nation whose idol he had so lately been.

The war with France, and the fear of revolutionary movements at home, rendered him for some years an alarmist ; and he joined with those who supported the hostilities into which Mr. Pitt and the Portland seceders from the Whig party unhappily plunged the empire. But he carried his support of arbitrary measures at home a very short way compared with the new allies of the Government in England ; and the proceedings of the Irish Ministry, during and after the rebellion, found in him an adversary as uncompromising as in the days of his most strenuous patriotism, and most dazzling popularity. Despairing of success by any efforts of the party in Parliament, he joined in the measure of secession adopted by the English Whigs, but after a manner far more reconcilable to a sense of public duty, as well as

far more effective in itself, than the absurd and inconsistent course which they pursued, of retaining the office of representatives, while they refused to perform any of its duties, except the enjoyment of its personal privileges. Mr. Grattan and the leaders of the Irish opposition vacated their seats at once, and left their constituents to choose other delegates. When the Union was propounded, they again returned to their posts, and offered a resistance to that measure, which at first proved successful, and deferred for a year the accomplishment of a measure planned in true wisdom, though executed by most corrupt and corrupting means—a measure as necessary for the well-being of Ireland as for the security of the empire at large. He entered the Imperial Parliament in 1805, and continued, with the exception of the question upon the renewal of the war in 1816, a constant and most powerful coadjutor of the Whig party, refusing office when they came into power upon Mr. Pitt's death, but lending them a strenuous support upon all great questions, whether of English policy or of Irish, and showing himself most conspicuously above the mean and narrow spirit that would confine a statesman's exertions to the questions which interest one portion of the empire, or with which his own fame in former times may have been more peculiarly entwined.

Among the orators, as among the statesmen of his age, Mr. Grattan occupies a place in the foremost rank; and it was the age of the Pitts, the Foxes, and the Sheridans. His eloquence was of a very high order, all but of the very highest, and it was eminently original. In the constant stream of a diction replete with epigram and point—a stream on which floated gracefully, be-

cause naturally, flowers of various hues,—was poured forth the closest reasoning, the most luminous statement, the most persuasive display of all the motives that could influence, and of all the details that could enlighten, his audience. Often a different strain was heard, and it was declamatory and vehement—or pity was to be moved, and its pathos was touching as it was simple—or, above all, an adversary sunk in baseness, or covered with crimes, was to be punished or to be destroyed, and a storm of the most terrible invective raged, with all the blights of sarcasm, and the thunders of abuse. The critic, led away for the moment, and unable to do more than feel with the audience, could in those cases, even when he came to reflect and to judge, find often nothing to reprehend; seldom in any case more than the excess of epigram, which had yet become so natural to the orator, that his argument and his narrative, and even his sagacious unfolding of principles, seemed spontaneously to close themselves in the most pointed terseness, and most apt and felicitous antitheses. From the faults of his country's eloquence he was, generally speaking, free. Occasionally an over-fondness for vehement expression, an exaggeration of passion, or an offensive appeal to Heaven, might be noted; very rarely a loaded use of figures, and, more rarely still, of figures broken and mixed. But the perpetual striving after far-fetched quaintness; the disdaining to say any one thing in an easy and natural style; the contempt of that rule, as true in rhetoric as in conduct, that it is wise to do common things in the common way; the affectation of excessive feelings upon all things, without regard to their relative importance; the making any occasion, even the

most fitted to rouse genuine and natural feeling, a mere opportunity of theatrical display—all these failings, by which so many oratorical reputations have been blighted among a people famous for their almost universal oratorical genius, were looked for in vain when Mr. Grattan rose, whether in the senate of his native country, or in that to which he was transferred by the Union. And if he had some peculiarity of outward appearance, as a low and awkward person, in which he resembled the first of orators, and even of manner, in which he had not like him made the defects of nature yield to severe culture; so had he one excellence of the very highest order, in which he may be truly said to have left all the orators of modern times behind—the severe abstinence which rests satisfied with striking the decisive blow in a word or two, not weakening its effect by repetition and expansion,—and another excellence, higher still, in which no orator of any age is his equal, the easy and copious flow of most profound, sagacious, and original principles, enunciated in terse and striking, but appropriate language. To give a sample of this latter peculiarity would be less easy, and would occupy more space; but of the former it may be truly said that Dante himself never conjured up a striking, a pathetic, and an appropriate image in fewer words than Mr. Grattan employed to describe his relation towards Irish independence, when, alluding to its rise in 1782, and its fall twenty years later, he said, “I sat by its cradle—I followed its hearse.”

In private life he was without a stain, whether of temper or of principle; singularly amiable, as well as of unblemished purity in all the relations of family and

of society ; of manners as full of generosity as they were free from affectation ; of conversation as much seasoned with spirit and impregnated with knowledge as it was void of all asperity and gall. Who ever heard him in private society, and marked the calm tone of his judicious counsel, the profound wisdom of his sagacious observations, the unceasing felicity of his expressions, the constant variety and brilliancy of his illustrations, could well suppose that he had conversed with the orator whose wit and whose wisdom enlightened and guided the senate of his country ; but in the playful hilarity of the companion, his unbroken serenity, his unruffled good nature, it would indeed have been a difficult thing to recognise the giant of debate, whose awful energies had been hurled, nor yet exhausted, upon the Corrys, the Duignans, and the Floods.*

The signal failure of the latter, when transplanted to the English Parliament, suggests a reference to the same passage in the life of Mr. Grattan. Men were variously inclined to conjecture upon his probable success ; and the singularity of his external appearance, and his manner of speaking, as well as his action, so unusual in

* It is always a matter of difficulty to draw the character of a person who belongs to another, and, in some particulars, a very different country. This has been felt in making the attempt to give a sketch of Mr. Grattan ; and whoever has read the most lively and picturesque piece of biography that was ever given to the world, Mr. C. Phillips's *Recollections of Curran*, will join in the regret here expressed, that the present work did not fall into hands so able to perform it in a masterly manner. The constant occupation consequent upon great professional eminence, has unfortunately withdrawn him from the walks of literature, in which he was so remarkably fitted to shine.

the English Parliament, made the event doubtful, for some time, during his speech of 1805. Nor were there wanting those surrounding Mr. Pitt who foretold "that it would not do." That great debater and experienced judge is said to have for some moments partaken of these doubts, when the happy execution of some passage, not perhaps marked by the audience at large, at once dispelled them; and he pronounced to his neighbours an authoritative and decisive sentence, which the unanimous voice of the House and of the country forthwith affirmed.

This illustrious patriot died a few days after his arrival in London, at the beginning of June, 1820, having come with the greatest difficulty, and in a dying state, to attend his Parliamentary duties. A request was made to his family, that his remains might be buried in Westminster Abbey, instead of being conveyed for interment to Ireland; and this having been complied with, the obsequies were attended by all the more distinguished members of both Houses of Parliament. The following Letter containing the request was signed by the leaders of the liberal party. The beauty of its chaste composition was much and justly admired at the time; but little wonder was excited by it, when the author came to be known. It proceeded from the pen of one of the greatest poets whom this country has produced, as well as one of its finest prose writers; who to this unstable fame adds the more imperishable renown of being also one of the most honourable men, and most uncompromising friends of civil and religious liberty, who have appeared in any age. The rare felicity of our times, in possessing two individuals to whom this description might be ap-

plied,—Rogers and Campbell,—alone makes it necessary to add that the former is here meant.

“ TO THE SONS OF MR. GRATTAN.

“ Filled with veneration for the character of your father, we venture to express a wish, common to us with many of those who most admired and loved him, that what remains of him should be allowed to continue among us.

“ It has pleased Divine Providence to deprive the empire of his services, while he was here in the neighbourhood of that sacred edifice where great men from all parts of the British dominions have been for ages interred. We are desirous of an opportunity of joining in the due honour to tried virtue and genius. Mr. Grattan belongs to us also, and great would be our consolation were we permitted to follow him to the grave, and to place him where he would not have been unwilling to lie—by the side of his illustrious fellow-labourers in the cause of freedom.”

MR. WILBERFORCE.

MR. WILBERFORCE.

CONTEMPORARY with Lord Grenville and Mr. Pitt, whose intimate friend he was, and whose partisan for a time, appeared a man, in some respects more illustrious than either—one who, among the greatest benefactors of the human race, holds an exalted station—one whose genius was elevated by his virtues, and exalted by his piety. It is, unfortunately, hardly necessary to name one whom the vices and the follies of the age have already particularised, by making it impossible that what has been said could apply to any but Mr. Wilberforce.

Few persons have ever either reached a higher and more enviable place in the esteem of their fellow-creatures, or have better deserved the place they had gained, than William Wilberforce. He was naturally a person of great quickness and even subtilty of mind, with a lively imagination, approaching to playfulness of fancy; and hence he had wit in an unmeasured abundance, and in all its varieties; for he was endowed with an exquisite sense of the ludicrous in character, the foundation of humour, as well as with the perception of remote resemblances, the essence of wit. These qualities, however, he had so far disciplined his faculties as to keep in habitual restraint, lest he should ever offend against strict decorum, by introducing light matter into serious discussion, or be betrayed into personal remarks too poignant for the feelings of individuals. For his nature was mild

and amiable beyond that of most men ; fearful of giving the least pain in any quarter, even while heated with the zeal of controversy on questions that roused all his passions ; and more anxious, if it were possible, to gain over rather than to overpower an adversary and disarm him by kindness, or the force of reason, or awakening appeals to his feelings, rather than defeat him by hostile attack. His natural talents were cultivated, and his taste refined by all the resources of a complete Cambridge education, in which, while the classics were sedulously studied, the mathematics were not neglected ; and he enjoyed in the society of his intimate friends, Mr. Pitt and Dean Milner, the additional benefit of foreign travel, having passed nearly a year in France, after the dissolution of Lord Shelburne's administration had removed Mr. Pitt from office. Having entered parliament as member for Hull, where his family were the principal commercial men of the place, he soon afterwards, upon the ill-fated coalition destroying all confidence in the Whig party, succeeded Mr. Foljambe as member for Yorkshire, which he continued to represent as long as his health permitted him, having only retired to a less laborious seat in the year 1812. Although generally attached to the Pitt ministry, he pursued his course wholly unfettered by party connexion, steadily refused all office through his whole life, nor would lay himself under any obligations by accepting a share of patronage ; and he differed with his illustrious friend upon the two most critical emergencies of his life, the question of peace with France in 1795, and the impeachment of Lord Melville ten years later.

His eloquence was of the highest order. It was persuasive and pathetic in an eminent degree ; but it was

occasionally bold and impassioned, animated with the inspiration which deep feeling alone can breathe into spoken thought, chastened by a pure taste, varied by extensive information, enriched by classical allusion, sometimes elevated by the more sublime topics of holy writ—the thoughts and the spirit

“That touch'd Isaiah's hallow'd lips with fire.”

Few passages can be cited in the oratory of modern times of a more electrical effect than the singularly felicitous and striking allusion to Mr. Pitt's resisting the torrent of Jacobin principles:—“He stood between the living and the dead, and the plague was stayed.” The singular kindness, the extreme gentleness of his disposition, wholly free from gall, from vanity, or any selfish feeling, kept him from indulging in any of the vituperative branches of rhetoric; but a memorable instance showed that it was any thing rather than the want of power which held him off from the use of the weapons so often in almost all other men's hands. When a well-known popular member thought fit to designate him repeatedly, and very irregularly, as the “*Honourable and religious gentleman*,” not because he was ashamed of the Cross he gloried in, but because he felt indignant at any one in the British senate deeming piety a matter of imputation, he poured out a strain of sarcasm which none who heard it can ever forget. A common friend of the parties having remarked to Sir Samuel Romilly, beside whom he sat, that this greatly outmatched Pitt himself, the great master of sarcasm, the reply of that great man and just observer, was worthy to be remarked,—“Yes,” said he, “it is the most striking thing

I almost ever heard ; but I look upon it as a more singular proof of Wilberforce's virtue than of his genius, for who but he ever was possessed of such a formidable weapon, and never used it ?”

Against all these accomplishments of a finished orator there was little to set on the other side. A feeble constitution, which made him say, all his life, that he never was either well or ill ; a voice sweetly musical beyond that of most men, and of great compass also, but sometimes degenerating into a whine ; a figure exceedingly undignified and ungraceful, though the features of the face were singularly expressive ; and a want of condensation, in the latter years of his life, especially, lapsing into digression, and ill calculated for a very business-like audience like the House of Commons—these may be noted as the only drawbacks which kept him out of the very first place among the first speakers of his age, whom, in pathos, and also in graceful and easy and perfectly elegant diction, as well as harmonious periods, he unquestionably excelled. The influence which the Member for Yorkshire always commanded in the old Parliament—the great weight which the head, indeed, the founder, of a powerful religious sect, possessed in the country—would have given extraordinary authority in the senate to one of far inferior personal endowments. But when these partly accidental circumstances were added to his powers, and when the whole were used and applied with the habits of industry which naturally belonged to one of his extreme temperance in every respect, it is difficult to imagine any one bringing a greater force to the aid of any cause which he might espouse.

Wherefore, when he stood forward as the leader of

the Abolition, vowed implacable war against Slavery and the Slave Trade, and consecrated his life to the accomplishment of its destruction, there was every advantage conferred upon this great cause, and the rather that he held himself aloof from party connexion. A few personal friends, united with him by similarity of religious opinions, might be said to form a small party, and they generally acted in concert, especially in all matters relating to the Slave question. Of these, Henry Thornton was the most eminent in every respect. He was a man of strong understanding, great powers of reasoning and of investigation, an accurate and a curious observer, but who had neither cultivated oratory at all, nor had received a refined education, nor had extended his reading beyond the subjects connected with moral, political, and theological learning. The trade of a banker, which he followed, engrossed much of his time; and his exertions, both in Parliament and through the press, were chiefly confined to the celebrated controversy upon the currency, in which his well-known work led the way, and to a bill for restricting the Slave Trade to part of the African coast, which he introduced when the Abolitionists were wearied out with their repeated failures, and had well-nigh abandoned all hopes of carrying the great measure itself. That measure was fated to undergo much vexatious delay, nor is there any great question of justice and policy, the history of which is less creditable to the British Parliament, or, indeed, to some of the statesmen of this country, although upon it mainly rests the fame of others.

When Mr. Wilberforce, following in Mr. Clarkson's track, had, with matchless powers of eloquence, sustained

by a body of the clearest evidence, unveiled all the horrors of a traffic, which, had it been attended with neither fraud nor cruelty of any kind, was, confessedly, from beginning to end, not a commerce, but a crime, he was defeated by large majorities, year after year. When, at length, for the first time, in 1804, he carried the Abolition Bill through the Commons, the Lords immediately threw it out; and the next year it was again lost in the Commons. All this happened while the opinion of the country was, with the single exception of persons having West India connexions, unanimous in favour of the measure. At different times there was the strongest and most general expression of public feeling upon the subject, and it was a question upon which no two men, endowed with reason, could possibly differ, because, admitting whatever could be alleged about the profits of the traffic, it was not denied that the gain proceeded from pillage and murder. Add to all this, that the enormous evil continued to disgrace the country and its legislature for twenty years, although the voice of every statesman of any eminence, Mr. Windham alone excepted, was strenuously lifted against it,—although upon this only question, Pitt, Fox, and Burke heartily agreed,—although by far the finest of all Mr. Pitt's speeches were those which he pronounced against it,—and although every press and every pulpit in the island habitually cried it down. How are we, then, to account for the extreme tenacity of life which the hateful reptile showed? How to explain the fact that all those powerful hands fell paralysed and could not bring it to death? If little honour redounds to the Parliament from this passage in our history, and if it is thus plainly shown that

unreformed House of Commons but ill represented country; it must also be confessed that Mr. Pitt's conduct gains as little glory from the retrospect. How could he, who never suffered any of his coadjutors, much less his underlings in office, to thwart his will even in trivial matters—he who would have cleared any of the departments of half their occupants, had they presumed to have an opinion of their own upon a single item of any budget, or an article in the year's estimates—how could he, after shaking the walls of the Senate with the thunders of his majestic eloquence, exerted with a zeal which at defiance all suspicions of his entire sincerity, yet suffer, that the object, just before declared the nearest to his heart, should be ravished from him when within his sight, nay, within his reach, by the votes of secretaries and under-secretaries, the puisne lords and the other fry of mere placemen,—the pawns of his wards? It is a question often anxiously put by the friends of the Abolition, never satisfactorily answered by those of the Minister; and if any additional comment were wanting on the darkest passage of his life, it is supplied by the ease with which he cut off the Slave traffic of the conquered colonies, an importation of thirty thousand yearly, which he had so long suffered to exist, though an order in Council could any day have extinguished it. This he never thought of till 1805, and then, of course, the instant he chose, he destroyed it for ever with a stroke of his pen. Again, when the Whigs were in power, they found the total abolition of the traffic as easy, that the measure in pursuing which Mr. Pitt had for so many long years allowed himself to be baffled, was carried by them with only sixteen dissentient voices

in a house of 250 members. There can then, unhappily, be but one answer to the question regarding Mr. Pitt's conduct on this great measure. He was, no doubt, quite sincere, but he was not so zealous as to risk any thing, to sacrifice any thing, or even to give himself any extraordinary trouble for the accomplishment of his purpose. The Court was decidedly against abolition; George III. always regarded the question with abhorrence, as savouring of innovation,—and innovation in a part of his empire, connected with his earliest and most rooted prejudices,—the Colonies. The courtiers took, as is their wont, the colour of their sentiments from him. The Peers were of the same opinion. Mr. Pitt had not the enthusiasm for right and justice, to risk in their behalf losing the friendship of the mammon of unrighteousness, and he left to his rivals, when they became his successors, the glory of that triumph in the sacred cause of humanity, which should have illustrated his name, who in its defence had raised all the strains of his eloquence to their very highest pitch.

MR. CANNING.



MR. CANNING.

WHEN Mr. Pitt stood against the united powers of the coalition by the support of the country and the people, in debate he had only Mr. Dundas, and occasionally Mr. Wilberforce, to whom he could look for assistance while attacked by Fox, Burke, North, Sheridan, Erskine, Windham. But a younger race afterwards grew up and came to his assistance; and of these Mr. Canning was undoubtedly the first. He was, in all respects, one of the most remarkable persons who lived in our times. Born with talents of the highest order, these had been cultivated with an assiduity and success which placed him in the first rank among the most accomplished scholars of his day; and he was only inferior to others in the walks of science, from the accident of the studies which Oxford cherished in his time being pointed almost exclusively to classical pursuits. But he was any thing rather than a mere scholar. In him were combined, with a rich profusion, the most lively original fancy—a happily retentive and ready memory—singular powers of lucid statement—and occasionally wit in all its varieties, now biting and sarcastic to overwhelm an antagonist—now pungent or giving point to an argument—now playful for mere amusement, and bringing relief to a tedious statement, or lending a charm to dry chains of close reasoning—*Erant ea in Philippo quæ, qui sine comparatione illorum spectaret, satis magna dixerit; sum-*

ma libertas in oratione, multæ facetiæ satis creber in reprehendendis, solutus in explicandis sententiis; erat etiam imprimis, ut temporibus illis, Græcis doctrinis institutus, in altercando cum aliquo acculeo et maledicto facetus.—(Cic., *Brutus*.) Superficial observers dazzled by this brilliancy, and by its sometimes being over-indulged, committed their accustomed mistake, and supposed that he who could thus adorn his subject was an amusing speaker only, while he was helping on the argument at every step,—often making skillful statements perform the office of reasoning, and oftener still seeming to be witty when he was merely exposing the weakness of hostile positions, and thus taking them by the artillery of his wit. But in truth his powers of ordinary reasoning were of a very high order, and could not be excelled by the most practised master of dialectics. It was rather in the deep and full measure of impassioned declamation in its legitimate combination with rapid argument, the highest reach of oratory, that he failed; and this he rarely attempted. Of his powers of argumentation, his capacity for the pursuits of abstract science, his genius for adorning the least attractive subjects, there remains an imperishable record in his celebrated speeches upon the "Currency," of all his efforts the most brilliant and the most happy.

This great man was the slave of no mean or paltry passions, but a lofty ambition inspired him; and had he not too early become trained to official habits, he would have avoided the distinguishing error of his life, an impression which clung to him from the desk, that no one can usefully serve his country, or effectually further

his principles, unless he possesses the power which place alone bestows. The traces of this belief are to be seen in many of the most remarkable passages of his life; and it even appears in the song with which he celebrated the praise of his illustrious leader and friend; for he treats as a fall his sacrificing power to principle, at a time when by retiring from office Mr. Pitt had earned the applause of millions. Mr. Canning himself gave an example yet more signal of abandoning office rather than tarnish his fame; and no act of his life can be cited which sheds a greater lustre on his memory.

In private society he was singularly amiable and attractive, though, except for a very few years of his early youth, he rarely frequented the circles of society, confining his intercourse to an extremely small number of warmly attached friends.* In all the relations of domestic life he was blameless, and was the delight of his family, as in them he placed his own.† His temper, though naturally irritable and uneasy, had nothing

* It is necessary to state this undoubted fact, that the folly of those may be rebuked, who have chosen to represent him as "a great diner-out." It may be safely affirmed that none of those historians of the day ever once saw him at table.

† It is well known how much more attachment was conceived for his memory by his family and his devoted personal friends, than by his most staunch political adherents. The friendships of statesmen are proverbially of rotten texture; but it is doubtful if ever this rottenness was displayed in a more disgusting manner than when the puny men of whose nostrils he had been the breath, joined his worst enemies as soon as they had laid him in the grave. It was said by one hardly ever related to him but in open hostility, that "the gallantry of his kindred had rescued his memory from the offices of his friends,"—in allusion to Lord Clanricarde's most powerful and touching appeal on that disgraceful occasion.

petty or spiteful in it; and as no one better knew how and when to resent an injury, so none could more readily or more gracefully forgive.

It is supposed that, from his early acquaintance with Mr. Sheridan and one or two other Whigs, he originally had a leaning towards that side of the question. But he entered into public life at a very early age, under the auspices of Mr. Pitt, to whom he continued steadily attached till his death; accompanying him when he retired from power, and again quitting office upon his decease. His principles were throughout those of a liberal Tory, above the prejudices of the bigots who have rendered Toryism ridiculous, and free from the corruption that has made it hateful. Imbued with a warm attachment to the ancient institutions of the country, somewhat apt to overrate the merits of mere antiquity, from his classical habits, and from early association, he nevertheless partook largely in the improved spirit of the age, and adopted all reforms, except such as he conscientiously believed were only dictated by a restless love of change, and could do no good, or such as went too far, and threatened revolution. But this was the posture into which his opinions and principles may be said ultimately to have subsided—these the bearings of his mind towards the great objects of political controversy in the station which it finally took when the tempest of French convulsion had ceased, and statesmen were moored in still water. He began his career in the most troublous period of the storm; and it happened to him, as to all men, that the tone of his sentiments upon state affairs was very much influenced through after times by the events which first awakened his ambition, or directed his

earliest pursuit of glory. The atrocities of the French Jacobins—the thoughtless violence of the extreme democratic party in this country, reduced by those atrocities to a small body—the spirit of aggression which the conduct of her neighbours had first roused in France, and which unexampled victories soon raised to a pitch that endangered all national independence—led Mr. Canning with many others who naturally were friendly to liberty, into a course of hostility towards all change, because they became accustomed to confound reform with revolution, and to dread nothing so much as the mischiefs which popular violence had produced in France, and with which the march of French conquests threatened to desolate Europe. Thus it came to pass that the most vigorous and the most active portion of his life was passed in opposing all reforms; in patronising the measures of coercion into which Mr. Pitt had so unhappily for his fame and for his country, been seduced by the alarms of weak, and by the selfish schemes of unprincipled men; and in resisting the attempts which the friends of peace persevered to make for terminating hostilities, so long the curse, and still by their fruits the bane of this empire.

It was not till the end of the war that his natural good sense had its free scope, and he became aware of the difference between Reforms, of which he admitted the necessity, and Revolution, against all risk of which he anxiously guarded. He had early joined Mr Pitt on the Catholic question, and, while yet the war raged, he had rendered incalculable service to the cause of Emancipation, by devoting to it some of his most brilliant displays in the House of Commons.

This, with the accident of a contested election in a great town bringing him more in contact with popular feelings and opinions, contributed to the liberal course of policy on almost all subjects, which he afterwards pursued. Upon one only question he continued firm and unbending; he was the most uncompromising adversary of all Parliamentary Reform,—resisting even the least change in the representative system, and holding that alteration once begun was fatal to its integrity.* This opposition to reform became the main characteristic of the Canning party, and it regulated their conduct on almost all questions. Before 1831, no exception can be perceived in their hostility to reform, unless their differing with the Duke of Wellington on East Retford can be regarded as such; but, in truth, their avowed reason for supporting that most insignificant measure was, that the danger of a real and effectual reform might thereby be warded off. The friends of Mr. Canning, including Lords Palmerston and Glenelg, who, in 1818, had been joined by Lord Melbourne,† continued steady to the same principles, until

* During the short period of his brilliant administration, the question of disfranchising a burgh, convicted of gross corruption, gave rise to the only difference between him and Mr. Brougham, who was understood to have mainly contributed towards that junction of the Whigs and liberal Tories which dissolved and scattered the old and high Tory party; and a division took place in which Mr. Canning was defeated.

† Lord Melbourne differed from the rest of the Canning party on this point. He always opposed Reform, but held that if any was to be granted, it must be in an ample measure; and he did not vote with them, but with the government, on the Reform question, although he resigned with them upon that occasion.

happily, on the formation of Lord Grey's government, they entirely changed their course, and became the advocates, with their reforming colleagues, of a change compared to which the greatest reforms ever contemplated by Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox, or denounced by Mr. Burke and Mr. Canning, hardly deserve to be classed among measures of innovation. No one can pronounce with perfect confidence on the conduct which any statesman would have pursued, had he survived the times in which he flourished. But if such an opinion may ever with safety be formed, it seems to be in the present case; and it would require far more boldness to surmise that Mr. Canning, or even Mr. Huskisson, would have continued in the government after the 1st of March, 1831, than to affirm that nothing could ever have induced such an alteration in their most fixed opinions upon so momentous a question.

But while such was the strength of his opinions, — prejudices as they seem, — on one great subject, on almost all other matters, whether of foreign or domestic policy, his views were liberal, and suited to the spirit of the age, while he was a firm supporter of the established constitution of the country. If ever man was made for the service and the salvation of a party, Mr. Canning seemed to have been raised up for that of the Tories: if ever party committed a fatal error, it was their suffering groundless distrust, and unintelligible dislikes to estrange him from their side. At a time when nothing but his powerful arm could recall unity to their camp, and save them from impending destruction, they not merely wilfully kindled the wrath of Achilles, but resolved that he should no longer fight on their

side, and determined to throw away their last chance of winning the battle. To him they by general assent preferred Lord Castlereagh as their leader, without a single shining quality except the carriage and the manners of high birth : while Mr. Canning, but for his accidental death, would have ended his life as governor of a country where men neither debate, nor write ; where eloquence evaporates in scores of paragraphs, and the sparkling of wit and the cadence of rhyme are alike unknown.

The defects of Mr. Canning's character or of his genius were not many, nor those difficult to discover. His irritable temper has been noted ; he had a love of trifling and a fondness for indulging in pleasantry, more injurious to his estimation with ordinary men than his temper. Nothing could be more natural than that one who so much excelled others in these lighter, more brilliant, but hardly attainable qualities, should be prone to exercise them over-much ; but they greatly marred the effect of his more solid and important talents. Above all, they enlarged the circle of his enemies, and occasionally transferred to it the friends whom they lost him. With the common run of ordinary mortals, who compose the mass of every country—with the plainer sort of men who form the bulk of every audience, and who especially bear sway in their own appointed place, the assembly that represents the English people,—it would have been contrary to nature if one so lively, so fond of his joke, so careless whom his merriment might offend, so ready to turn the general laugh against any victim,—had been popular, nay, had failed to prove the object of suspicion, and even dislike. The duller portion, over whose

heads his lighter missiles flew, were offended with one who spoke so lightly; it was almost personal to them if he jested, and a classical allusion was next thing to an affront. "He will be laughing at the quorum or talking metaphysics next," said the squire, representing a county. But even they who emulated him and favoured his claims, did not much like the man who had made them so merry, for they felt what it was that they laughed at, and it might be their own turn to-morrow.

That his oratory suffered materially from this self-indulgent habit, so hard to resist by him who possesses the faculty of amusing his audience, and can scarcely pause at the moment that he is exerting it successfully, it would be incorrect to affirm. The graver parts of his discourse were perfectly sustained; they were unmingled with ribaldry; they were quite as powerful in themselves as if they had not stood out from the inferior matter and had not soared above it. There is no doubt, however, that with an unreflecting audience, their effect was somewhat confused by the cross lights which the wit, sometimes bordering upon drollery, shot over the canvass. But his declamation, though often powerful, always beautifully ornate, never deficient in admirable diction, was certainly not of the very highest class. It wanted depth: it came from the mouth, not from the heart; and it tickled or even filled the ear rather than penetrated the bosom of the listener. The orator never seemed to forget himself and be absorbed in his theme; he was not carried away by his passions, and he carried not his audience along with him. An actor stood before us, a first-rate one no doubt, but still an actor; and we never forgot that it was a representation we were witnessing, not a real scene.

The Grecian artist was of the second class only, at whose fruit the *birds* pecked ; while, on seeing Parrhasius' picture, *men* cried out to draw aside the curtain. Mr. Canning's exclamation entertained his hearers, so artistly was it executed ; but only an inexperienced critic could mistake it for the highest reach of the rhetorical art. The truly great orator is he who carries away his hearer, or fixes his whole attention on the subject—with the subject fills his whole soul—than the subject, will suffer him to think of no other thing—of the subject's existence alone will let him be conscious, while the vehement inspiration lasts on his own mind which he communicates to his hearer—and will only suffer him to reflect on the admirable execution of what he has heard after the burst is over, the whirlwind has passed away, and the excited feelings have in the succeeding lull sunk into repose.

The vice of this statesman's public principles was much more pernicious in its influence upon his public conduct than the defects which we have just remarked were upon his oratory. Bred up in office from his early years, he had become so much accustomed to its pleasures that he felt uneasy when they were taken from him. It was in him nothing like a sordid propensity that produced this frame of mind. For emolument, he felt the most entire indifference ; upon the management of petty intrigue which is called jobbing, he looked down with sovereign contempt. But his extraordinarily active mind, impatient of rest, was only to be allayed by occupation, and office afforded this at all hours, and in boundless measure. His kind and friendly nature, attaching him strongly to his associates, as it strongly fixed their affections upon him, made him feel uneasy

at their exclusion from power, and desirous to possess the means of gratifying them. Above all, though a great debater, and breathing the air of Parliament as the natural element of his being, he yet was a man of action too, and would sway the counsels as well as shake the senates of his country. He loved debate for its exercise of his great faculties; he loved power for its own sake, caring far less for display than for gratification. Hence, when he retired from office upon the dispute with Lord Castlereagh, (a passage of his life much and unjustly blamed at the time, but which had it been ever so exactly as most men then viewed it, has in later times been cast into the thickest shades of oblivion by acts infinitely more abominable and disgraceful,) and when he found that instead of a speedy return to power he was condemned to years of exclusion, his impatience led him to the imprudent step of serving under his successful rival on a foreign mission of an unimportant cast. The uneasiness which he manifestly suffered in retirement, even made him consent to the scheme of more permanent expatriation,* which only the unhappy death of Lord Castlereagh prevented from taking effect. But these were rather matters affecting the person than perverting the principles, or misguiding the conduct of the party. The unfortunate love of power, carried too far, and felt so as to make the gratification of it essential to existence, is ruinous to the character of a statesman. It leads often to abandonment of principle, constantly to compromise; it subjects him to frequent dependence; it lowers the tone of his mind, and teaches his spirit to feed on the bitter bread of other's

* As Governor-General of India.

bounty; above all, it occasionally severs him from his natural friends, and brings him acquainted with strange and low associates, whose natures, as their habits, are fit to be scorned by him, and who have with him but one thing in common, that they seek the same object with himself—they for love of gain, he for lust of dominion.

Tu lascerai ogni cosa diletta
 Più caramente, é questo, é quello strale
 Cho l' arco d' esilio pria suetta,
 Tu proverai come si sa di sale
 Lo pane d' altrui, é come é duro calle
 Lo scendere é il salir altrui scale
 E che il più ti graverà le spalle
 Sarà la compagnia malvagia é scempia
 Cho tu vedrai in questa valle !*

Men are apt to devise ingenious excuses for those failings which they cherish most fondly, and if they cannot close their eyes to them, had rather defend than correct. Mr. Canning reasoned himself into a belief which he was wont to profess, that no man can serve his country with effect out of office; as if there were no public in this country; as if there were no Parliament; no forum; no press; as if the Government were in the hands of a Vizier to whom the Turk had given his signet-ring, or a favourite to whom the Czarina had tossed her handkerchief; as if the patriot's vocation had ceased and the voice of public virtue were heard no more; as if the people were without power over their rulers, and only existed to be taxed and to obey! A more pernicious notion never entered the mind of a public man, nor one more fitted to under-

* DANTE, PAR.

mine his public virtue. It may be made the cloak for every species of flagitious and sordid calculation; and what in him was only a sophistical self-deception, or a mere illusion of dangerous self-love, might have been, by the common herd of trading politicians, used as the cover for every low, and despicable, and unprincipled artifice. No errors are so dangerous as those false theories of morals which conceal the bounds between right and wrong; enable Vice to trick herself out in the attire of Virtue; and hide our frailties from ourselves by throwing around them the garb of profound wisdom.

Of Mr. Canning it may be justly observed, as of Mr. Fox, that whatever errors he committed on other questions, on the Abolition of the Slave Trade he was undeviatingly true to sound principles and enlightened policy. Respecting the questions connected with Emancipation his course was by no means so commendable; but of the Abolitionists he was at once a strenuous and effective ally. It is understood that he deeply lamented the contrast which Mr. Pitt's proceedings on this question presented to his speeches; and he insisted on bringing forward a motion against the policy of capturing colonies to extend the Slave-traffic, when Mr. Pitt was in retirement.

SIR SAMUEL ROMILLY.

SIR SAMUEL ROMILLY.

How different from Mr. Pitt's conduct was that of Lord Grenville, who no sooner acceded to office in 1806, than he encouraged all the measures which first restrained, and then entirely abolished that infernal traffic! The crown lawyers of his administration were directed to bring in a bill for abolishing the foreign slave-trade of our colonies, as well as all importation into the conquered settlements—and when it is recollected that Sir Samuel Romilly at that time added lustre and gave elevation to the office of solicitor-general, it may well be supposed that those duties were cheerfully and duly followed both by him and by his honest, learned, and experienced colleague, Sir Arthur Pigott. It is fit that no occasion on which Sir Samuel Romilly is named should ever be passed over without an attempt to record the virtues and endowments of so great and so good a man, for the instruction of after ages.

Few persons have ever attained celebrity of name and exalted station, in any country, or in any age, with such unsullied purity of character, as this equally eminent and excellent person. His virtue was stern and inflexible, adjusted, indeed, rather to the rigorous standard of ancient morality than to the less ambitious and less elevated maxims of the modern code. But in this he very widely differed from the antique model

upon which his character generally appeared to be framed, and also very far surpassed it, that there was nothing either affected or repulsive about him; and if ever a man existed who would more than any other have scorned the pitiful fopperies which disfigured the worth of Cato, or have shrunk from the harsher virtue of Brutus, Romilly was that man. He was, in truth, a person of the most natural and simple manners, and one in whom the kindest charities and warmest feelings of human nature were blended in the largest measure with that firmness of purpose, and unrelaxed sincerity of principle, in almost all other men found to be little compatible with the attributes of a gentle nature and the feelings of a tender heart.

The observer who gazes upon the character of this great man is naturally struck first of all with its most prominent feature, and that is the rare excellence which we have now marked, so far above every gift of the understanding, and which throws the lustre of mere genius into the shade. But his capacity was of the highest order. An extraordinary reach of thought; great powers of attention and of close reasoning; a memory quick and retentive; a fancy eminently brilliant, but kept in perfect discipline by his judgment and his taste, which was nice, cultivated, and severe, without any of the squeamishness so fatal to vigour—these were the qualities which, under the guidance of the most persevering industry, and with the stimulus of a lofty ambition, rendered him unquestionably the first advocate, and the most profound lawyer, of the age he flourished in; placed him high among the ornaments of the Senate; and would, in all likelihood, have

given him the foremost place among them all, had not the occupations of his laborious profession necessarily engrossed a disproportionate share of his attention, and made political pursuits fill a subordinate place in the scheme of his life. *Jurisperitorum disertissimus, disertorum vero jurisperitissimus*. As his practice, so his authority at the bar and with the bench was unexampled; and his success in Parliament was great and progressive. Some of his speeches, both forensic and Parliamentary, are nearly unrivalled in excellence. The reply, even as reported in 11 *Vesey, junior*, in the cause of *Hugonin v. Beasley*,* where legal matters chiefly were in question, may give no mean idea of his extraordinary powers. The last speech that he pronounced in the House of Commons, upon a bill respecting the law of naturalisation, which gave him occasion to paint the misconduct of the expiring Parliament in severe and even dark colours, was generally regarded as unexampled among the efforts of his eloquence; nor can they who recollect its effects ever cease to lament with tenfold bitterness of sorrow, the catastrophe which terminated his life and extinguished his glory, when they reflect that the vast accession to his influence from being chosen for Westminster, came at a time when his genius had reached its amplest display, and his authority in Parliament, unaided by station, had attained the highest eminence. The friend of public virtue, and the advocate of human

* A case very nearly resembling this, *Macabe v. Hussey*, was argued in the House of Lords in October, 1831, by Mr. O'Connell, and his argument was a masterpiece, according to the judgment of those who heard it.

improvement, will mourn still more sorrowfully over his urn than the admirers of genius, or those, who are dazzled by political triumphs. For no one could know Romilly, and doubt that, as he only valued his own success and his own powers, in the belief that they might conduce to the good of mankind, so each augmentation of his authority, each step of his progress, must have been attended with some triumph in the cause of humanity and justice. True, he would at length, in the course of nature, have ceased to live; but then the bigot would have ceased to persecute—the despot to vex—the desolate poor to suffer—the slave to groan and tremble—the ignorant to commit crimes—and the ill-contrived law to engender criminality.

On these things all men are agreed; but if a more distinct account be desired of his eloquence, it must be said that it united all the more severe graces of oratory, both as regards the manner and the substance. No man argued more closely when the understanding was to be addressed; no man declaimed more powerfully when indignation was to be aroused or the feelings moved. His language was choice and pure; his powers of invective resembled rather the grave authority with which the judge puts down a contempt, or punishes an offender, than the attack of an advocate against his adversary and his equal. His imagination was the minister whose services were rarely required, and whose mastery was never for an instant admitted. His sarcasm was tremendous, nor always very sparingly employed. His manner was perfect, in voice, in figure, in a countenance of singular beauty and dignity; nor was any thing in his oratory more striking or more

effective than the heartfelt sincerity which it throughout displayed, in topic, in diction, in tone, in look, in gesture. "In Scauri oratione sapientis hominis et recti, gravitas summa, et naturalis quædam inerat auctoritas, non ut causam, sed ut testimonium dicere putares. Significabat enim non prudentiam solum, sed, quod maxime rem continebat, fidem."*

Considering his exalted station at the bar, his pure and unsullied character, and the large space which he filled in the eye of the country, men naturally looked for his ascent to the highest station in the profession of which he was, during so many years, the ornament and the pride. Nor could any one question that he would have presented to the world the figure of a consummate judge. He alone felt any doubt upon the extent of his own judicial qualities; and he has recorded in his journal (that invaluable document in which he was wont to set down freely his sentiments on men and things) a modest opinion, expressing his apprehension, should he ever be so tried, that men would say of him "*Capaz imperii nisi imperasset.*" With this single exception, offering so rare an instance of impartial self-judgment, and tending of itself to its own refutation, all who had no interest in the elevation of others, have held his exclusion from the supreme place in the law, as one of the heaviest items in the price paid for the factious structure of our practical government.

In his private life and personal habits he exhibited a model for imitation, and an object of unqualified esteem. All his severity was reserved for the forum and the senate, when vice was to be lashed, or justice vindicated,

* Cic., *Brutus*.

the public delinquent exposed, or the national oppressor overawed. In his family and in society, where it was his delight, and the only reward of his unremitting labours, to unbend, he was amiable, simple, natural, cheerful. The vast resources of his memory,—the astonishing economy of time, by which he was enabled to read almost every work of interest that came from the press of either his hereditary or his native country, either France or England,—the perfect correctness of his taste, refined to such a pitch that his pencil was one of no ordinary power, and his verses, when once or twice only he wrote poetry, were of great merit,—his freedom from affectation,—the wisdom of not being above doing ordinary things in the ordinary way,—all conspired to render his society peculiarly attractive, and would have made it courted even had his eminence in higher matters been far less conspicuous. While it was the saying of one political adversary, the most experienced and correct observer* among all the parliamentary men of his time, that he never was out of his place while Romilly spoke without finding that he had cause to lament his absence,—it was the confession of all who were admitted to his private society, that they forgot the lawyer, the orator, and the patriot, and had never been aware, while gazing on him with admiration, how much more he really deserved that tribute than he appeared to do when seen from afar.

If defects are required to be thrown into such a sketch, and are deemed as necessary as the shades in a picture, or, at least, as the more subdued tones of some

* Mr. Charles Long, afterwards Lord Farnborough.

parts for giving relief to others, this portraiture of Romilly must be content to remain imperfect. For what is there on which to dwell with blame, if it be not a proneness to prejudice in favour of opinions resembling his own, a blindness to the defects of those who held them, and a prepossession against those who held them not? While there is so very little to censure, there is unhappily much to deplore. A morbid sensibility embittered many hours of his earlier life, and when deprived of the wife whom he most tenderly and justly loved, contributed to bring on an inflammatory fever, in the paroxysm of which he untimely met his end.

The Letter of Mr. Brougham, on Abuse of Charities, was communicated in manuscript to him while attending the sick-bed of that excellent person, whose loss brought on his own. It tended to beguile some of those sorrowful hours, the subject having long deeply engaged his attention; and it was the last thing that he read. His estimate of its merits was exceedingly low; at least he said he was sure no tract had ever been published on a more dry subject, or was likely to excite less attention. The interest of the subject, however, was much undervalued by him; for the letter ran through eight editions in the month of October.*

That he highly approved of the labours of the Education Committee, however, and that the conduct of its Chairman shared fully in his approval, there can be no doubt. In the last will which he made, there is a warm

* The last book of any importance read by him was Mr. Hallam's first great work, of which he justly formed the highest opinion, and recommended the immediate perusal of it to the author of the Letter, as a contrast to that performance, in respect of the universal interest of the subject.

expression of personal regard and a strong testimony to public merits, accompanying a desire that his friend would join with another whom he had long known intimately, and whom he consequently most highly and most justly esteemed, Mr. Whishaw, in performing the office of literary executor. The manuscripts which he left were numerous and important. The most interesting are the beautiful Sketches of his early life, and the Journal to which reference has been already made. But his commentaries upon subjects connected with jurisprudence are those of the greatest value; for they show that most of the reforms of which he maintains the expediency, have since his decease been adopted by the Legislature; and they thus form a powerful reason for adopting those others which he recommends, and which are not now less favoured by the general opinion of mankind, than were the former class at the early period when he wrote. The injunction to his friends contained in his will, was truly characteristic of the man. He particularly desired them, in determining whether or not the manuscripts should be published, only to regard the prospect there was of their being in any degree serviceable to mankind, and by no means to throw away a thought upon any injury which the appearance of such unfinished works might do to his literary character. Whoever knew him, indeed, was well persuaded that in all his exertions his personal gratification never was for a moment consulted, unless as far as whatever he did, or whatever he witnessed in others, had a relish for him exactly proportioned to its tendency towards the establishment of the principles which formed, as it were, a part of his nature, and towards the promotion of human happiness, the grand aim of all his views. This is that colleague and

comrade whose irreparable loss his surviving friends have had to deplore through all their struggles for the good cause in which they had stood by his side ; a loss which each succeeding day renders heavier, and harder to bear, when the misconduct of some, and the incapacity of others, so painfully recall the contrast of one whose premature end gave the first and the only pang that had ever come from him ; and all his associates may justly exclaim in the words of Tully regarding Hortensius, “ *Augebat etiam molestiam, quod magnâ sapientium civium bonorumque penuriâ, vir egregius, conjunctissimusque mecum consiliorum omnium societate, alienissîmo reipublicæ tempore extinctus, et auctoritatis, et prudentiæ suæ triste nobis desiderium reliquerat ; dolebamque, quod non, ut plerique putabant, adversarium, aut obtrectatorem laudum mearum, sed socium potius et consortem gloriæ laboris amiseram.*”

And here for a moment let us pause. We have been gazing on the faint likenesses of many great men. We have been traversing a Gallery, on either side of which they stand ranged. We have made bold in that edifice to “ expatiate and confer the State affairs” of their age. Cognizant of its history, aware of the principles by which the English chiefs are marshalled, sagacious of the springs that move the politic wheel whose revolutions we contemplate, it is an easy thing for us to comprehend the phenomenon most remarkably presented by those figures and their arrangement ; nor are we led to stare aghast at that which would astound any mind not previously furnished with the ready solution to make all plain and

intelligible. But suppose some one from another hemisphere, or another world, admitted to the spectacle which we find so familiar, and consider what would be its first effect upon his mind.—“Here,” he would say, “stand the choicest spirits of their age; the greatest wits, the noblest orators, the wisest politicians, the most illustrious patriots. Here they stand, whose hands have been raised for their country, whose magical eloquence has shook the spheres, whose genius has poured out strains worthy the inspiration of the gods, whose lives were devoted to the purity of their principles, whose memories were bequeathed to a race grateful for benefits received from their sufferings and their sacrifices. Here stand all these “lights of the world and demigods of fame;” but here they stand not ranged on one side of this Gallery, having served a common country! With the same bright object in their view, their efforts were divided, not united; they fiercely combated each other, and not together assailed some common foe; their great exertions were bestowed, their more than mortal forces were expended, not in furthering the general good, not in resisting their country’s enemies, but in conflicts among themselves; and all their triumphs were won over each other, and all their sufferings were endured at each other’s hands!”—“Is it,” the unenlightened stranger would add, “a reality that I survey, or a troubled vision that mocks my sight? Am I indeed contemplating the prime of men amongst a rational people, or the Coryphei of a band of mimes? Or, haply, am I admitted to survey the cells of some hospital appointed for the insane; or is it, peradventure, the vaults of some pandemonium through which my eyes

have been suffered to wander till my vision aches, and my brain is disturbed?"

Thus far the untutored native of some far-distant wild on earth, or the yet more ignorant inhabitant of some world remote, "beyond the solar walk or Milky Way." We know more; we apprehend things better. But let us, even in our pride of enlightened wisdom, pause for a moment to reflect on this most anomalous state of things,—this arrangement of political affairs which systematically excludes at least one-half of the great men of each age from their country's service, and devotes both classes infinitely more to maintaining a conflict with one another than to furthering the general good. And here it may be admitted at once that nothing can be less correct than their view, who regard the administration of affairs as practically in the hands of only one-half the nation, whilst the excluded portion is solely occupied in thwarting their proceedings. The influence of both Parties is exerted, and the movement of the state machine partakes of both the forces impressed upon it; neither taking the direction of the one nor of the other, but a third line between both. This concession, no doubt, greatly lessens the evil; but it is very far indeed from removing it. Why must there always be this exclusion, and this conflict? Does not every one immediately perceive how it must prove detrimental to the public service in the great majority of instances; and how miserable a make-shift for something better and more rational it is, even where it does more good than harm? Besides, if it requires a constant and systematic opposition to prevent mischief, and keep the machine of state in the right path, of what use

is our boasted representative government, which is designed to give the people a control over their rulers, and serves no other purpose at all? Let us for a moment consider the origin of this system of Party, that we may the better be able to appreciate its value and to comprehend its manner of working.

The Origin of Party may be traced by fond theorists and sanguine votaries of the system, to a radical difference of the opinion and principle; to the "*idem sentire de republicâ*" which has at all times marshalled men in combinations or split them in oppositions; but it is pretty plain to any person of ordinary understanding, that a far less romantic ground of union and of separation has for the most part existed—the individual interests of the parties; the *idem velle atque idem nolle*; the desire of power and of plunder, which, as all cannot share, each is desirous of snatching and holding. The history of English party is as certainly that of a few great men and powerful families on the one hand, contending for place and power, with a few others on the opposite quarter, as it is the history of the Plantagenets, the Tudors and the Stuarts. There is nothing more untrue than to represent principle as at the bottom of it; interest is at the bottom, and the opposition of principle is subservient to the opposition of interest. Accordingly, the result has been, that unless perhaps where a dynasty was changed, as in 1688, and for some time afterwards, and excepting on questions connected with this change, the very same conduct was held and the same principles professed by both Parties when in office and by both when in opposition. Of this we have seen sufficiently remarkable instances in the course of the foregoing pages. The

Whig in opposition was for retrenchment and for peace; transplant him into office, he cared little for either. Bills of coercion, suspensions of the constitution, were his abhorrence when propounded by Tories; in place, he propounded them himself. Acts of indemnity and of attainder were the favourites of the Tory in power; the Tory in opposition was the enemy of both. The gravest charge ever brought by the Whig against his adversary was the personal proscription of an exalted individual to please a King; the worst charge that the Tory can level against the Whig is the support of a proscription still less justifiable to please a Viceroy.

It cannot surely in these circumstances be deemed extraordinary that plain men, uninitiated in the Aristocratic Mysteries whereof a rigid devotion to Party forms one of the most sacred, should be apt to see a very different connexion between principle and faction from the one usually put forward; and that without at all denying a relation between the two things, they should reverse the account generally given by Party men, and suspect them of taking up principles in order to marshal themselves in alliances and hostilities for their own interests, instead of engaging in those contests because of their conflicting principles. In a word, there seems some reason to suppose that interest having really divided them into bands, principles are professed for the purpose of better compassing their objects by maintaining a character and gaining the support of the people.

That to a certain degree this is true, we think can hardly be doubted, although it is also impossible to deny that there is a plain line of distinction between the two great Parties which formerly prevailed in this country

upon one important point, the foundations and extent of the Royal Prerogative. But that this line can now be traced it would be absurd to pretend. Mr. Pitt, and even Lord North had no other opinions respecting kingly power than Mr. Fox or Burke; and the rival theories of Sir Robert Filmer and Mr. Locke were as obsolete during the American war as they are at this day. Then have not men, since Jacobitism and Divine Right were exploded, generally adopted opinions upon the practical questions of the day in such a manner as to let them conveniently co-operate with certain acts of statesmen and oppose others; join some family interests together in order to counterbalance some other family interests; league themselves in bodies to keep or to get power in opposition to other bands formed with a similar view? This surely will not, upon a calm review of the facts, be denied by any whose judgment is worth having.

Observe how plainly the course pursued by one class dictates that to be taken by the other. There must be combinations, and there must be oppositions; and therefore things to differ upon, as well as things to agree upon must needs be found. Thus, the King is as hostile as bigotry and tyranny can make him to American liberty, and his ministers support him in the war to crush it. This throws the opposition upon the liberal side of the question without which they can neither keep together nor continue to resist the ministry. Is any man so blind as seriously to believe that, had Mr. Burke and Mr. Fox been the Ministers of George III. they would have resigned rather than try to put down the Americans? If so, let him open his eyes, and ask himself another simple question, What Minister would ever volunteer his advice

to dismember the empire ? But if that fails to convince him, let him recollect that the American war had raged for years before the word "Separation" crossed the lips of any man in either House of Parliament—all the attacks were made upon the ill-treatment of our fellow-subjects, and the mismanagement of the war ; the Whigs would have been more kind rulers and better generals, but only in order to prevent the last of calamities—Separation and Independence. Nay, the same Party being now in power, have avowed towards Canada the very principles upon which Lord North carried on the former contest. The Tories may perhaps allege that they have of late been more consistent.

Take another instance. While the Whigs were out of office the same King's bigotry refused to emancipate the Roman Catholics. It would be a strong thing to hold, that the Party which was always distinguished for its hatred of Romanism, and which had founded its power of old on the penal laws, must of necessity have taken an opposite view of this question, because circumstances had changed and those laws had become unnecessary, and because the King, supposing them to have been his servants, would have adhered to the ancient Whig tenets. But when, in opposition themselves, they found some millions ready to rally against the Court, and saw their adversaries the ministers of the day, siding with the King, they never hesitated a moment in taking their line, and fought gallantly till the battle was won. Without affirming that the altered view of the question was wholly caused by the position of Parties, and dictated by the Ministers taking the other line, we may at least assert, without any fear of contradiction, that the promptitude with which the change

was made by the leaders is traceable to this source ; and that their having power to make their less liberal and enlightened followers in the country join them, doing violence to their most rooted prejudices, can in no other way be accounted for than by referring to the operation of Party tactics. Indeed, this operation alone can explain the phenomenon of the two great factions having changed sides on the whole question ; the Tories taking the very part now which the Whigs did in the days of the Somers, the Marlboroughs, the Godolphins, and somewhat earlier, in the times of the Russells and the Sidneys. The solution of the enigma is to be found chiefly in the accidental circumstance of the Parties having at the two different periods been in opposite positions—the Whigs in power at one time, the Tories at the other, and the Crown holding the same course in each case. The only other circumstance that exists to modify this conclusion, is, that the principles of the Whig families at the Revolution led to their being in power ; although it would be a bold thing to assert that, if the Tory families had been preferred, through some accident of personal favour, by William and Anne, the Whig families then in opposition would have supported the penal code ; or even that, if George I. had turned his back upon them, and courted their adversaries, they would have kept quite clear of Jacobite connexions, which some of the most distinguished, as it was, are well known to have formed.

Nor is there much reason to suppose that had the Parties changed positions in 1792 the Whigs would, as a matter of course, have been against the war. Half the Party were found to be the most strenuous advocates

of a ~~signature~~ with France, and their accession to office as a body followed this avowal. The whole could not pursue the same course; and Mr. Pitt having unhappily declared for war, the opposition was for peace. If any one feels very confident that the great men whom we have been contemplating in their glorious resistance to that ruinous contest, would have maintained peace at all hazards, including a quarrel with the Aristocracy and the Court, had they been George III.'s Ministers, we beseech him to consider how little disposed they showed themselves, after Mr. Pitt's death, to make sacrifices for the great object of pacification, and how forward they were in gratifying the King's prejudices on Hanover, which their new leader declared was as much a British interest as Hampshire. One thing is certain enough,—had the Whigs joined the King and the aristocracy in making war, Mr. Pitt would have been as strenuous an apostle of Peace as ever preached that holy word.

If the new line of distinction which now severs the two sets of men be observed, little doubt will be cast upon our former conclusions. The one is for reform, the other against it. But the old Whig Party were always very lukewarm reformers: one section of them were its most bitter enemies—the rest, with few exceptions, its very temperate supporters. Even Mr. Fox's reform of Parliament would have gone into a mighty narrow compass. But there rests no kind of doubt on this as well as other principles having been rather the consequence than the cause of Party distinctions; for when Mr. Pitt in opposition, and afterwards in office, brought forward the question, he received a very moderate and divided support from the Whigs; and no small part of the

Government which carried the question in 1831, and of the present Reform Government, are Tories who had before been strenuously opposed to all changes whatever in our parliamentary system. That the same Ministry of 1831 was substantially Whig, and carried the question by a far greater effort than ever Mr. Pitt made for its advancement, is not to be doubted. But their influence, nay their existence depended upon it: they gained more by it, as a Party, than by any other course they could have gained. This then can form no exception whatever to the position that, when parties are formed mainly for the purpose of obtaining and retaining power, they adopt principles and act upon them, with a view to serve this main object of the Party union. The people in a country like this have their weight as well as the Court and the aristocracy, and their opinions and feelings must be consulted by Party leaders in order to gain their support. Whatever insincerity there may be in the latter, however they may be suspected of professing opinions for the purpose of their policy, the people can have no such sinister motives. Hence a Party may take popular ground when in opposition with the view of defeating the Court, and it may also take the same ground in office to fortify itself against a hostile Court or a generally unfriendly aristocracy.

This induction of facts is incomplete, if the *instantia negativa*, the converse proof, be wanting, of cases where great principles not espoused by Parties, nor made matter of Party manœuvring, have had a different fate. Unhappily there are comparatively very few questions of importance which have enjoyed this exemption. One of the greatest of all, however, the Slave

Trade, is of the number ; the Abolition having been first taken up by Thomas Clarkson, a Foxite in opinion, and in Parliament by Mr. Wilberforce, a friend of Mr. Pitt (but neither of them Party men), was never made the subject of Party distinction. Accordingly, the men of both sides were divided on it, according to the colours of their real opinions, and not of their Party differences : nor was it ever either supported or opposed by the marshalled strength of faction. The doctrines of Free Trade and the amendment of the Criminal Law furnish other instances of the same rare description. No one can be at any loss to perceive how very differently these questions have been handled from the Party ones to which we before adverted. No one can be at a loss to perceive how much truth has gained by the remarkable diversity.

We have hitherto been referring to the fate of great principles,—of general questions ; but the same will be found to have been the treatment of subjects more personal and accidental. Mr. Pitt, after a short co-operation with the Whigs, sacrificed them to the prejudices of the King and returned to power, while they retired to their opposition places and habits. If, instead of this result, the negotiations of 1804 had led to a junction of the two great Parties, he is a bold man who will take upon himself to affirm that the Whigs would on the Treasury Bench have read Lord St. Vincent's famous 10th Report with the same eyes which glared upon Lord Melville from the opposite side of the House, and conducted them to the impeachment of that Minister a few months afterwards. Again, the greatest personal question that ever distracted rather than divided

the country, was the treatment of the Queen in 1820. Had the Whigs then been in office under George IV., as they were in habits of Party connexion with him in 1806, would they have been so strenuous in opposing his favourite Bill of Pains and Penalties? It would be a very adventurous thing to assert any thing of the kind, when we recollect how unreservedly they lent themselves in 1806 to the first persecution of the ill-fated Queen by the "Delicate Investigation," as it was most inappropriately called, which they conducted in secret and behind the back of the accused. The Tories were then in opposition to the Prince and to the Whig ministry; and they bitterly denounced that secret proceeding. Who can doubt that had the Whigs in 1820 been the ministers and proposed the Bill, it would have found as strenuous opposition from the Tories as this Bill found from the Whigs? But are we left to our conjectures upon this point? No such matter. The Tories are now in opposition; the Whigs in office; and a bill of attainder has been defended by the Whigs and opposed by the Tories, having for its avowed object to banish men from their country without a trial, or a hearing, or even a notice; and accomplishing this object by declaring their entrance within their native land a capital offence. Had the Whigs in power brought forward a bill to exile the Queen without hearing her, and to declare her landing in England high treason, we have a right to affirm that the Tories being in opposition would have strenuously resisted such a measure. Two cases more parallel can hardly be imagined; for there was a charge of treason in both; there was the temporary absence of the party accused; there was a riot or tumult expected upon that

party's return; there was the wish to prevent such a return; and there was no desire in either the one case or the other to shed a drop of blood, but only a wish to gain the object by a threat. On the other hand, have the Tories any right to affirm that if they had chanced to be in power when the Canada affairs were to be settled, no bills of attainder would have been passed? The forms of law might have been more artificially and skilfully preserved; but that the principles of substantial justice would have been better maintained towards Papineau and his adherents in 1838 than they were towards Queen Caroline in 1820, we have no right whatever to believe. The Bill of 1820 is the great blot upon their public character, the worst passage by far in the history of their Party; and they must have felt while they assented to its iniquities and plunged the country into the most imminent dangers, that they were yielding to the vilest caprices of an unprincipled and tyrannical master.

It must not be supposed that those who concur in these general remarks upon party are pronouncing a very severe censure upon all public men in this country, or placing themselves vainly on an eminence removed from strife, and high above all vulgar contentions—

*Despicere unde queas alios, passimque videre,
Errare, atque viam palanteis querere vitæ,
Certare ingenio, contendere nobilitate,
Nocteis atque dies niti præstante labore
Ad summas emergere opea, rerumque potiri.*

Lucret. II.

The blame now cast upon politicians affects them all equally; and is only like that which ethical reasoners on

the selfish theory of morals may be supposed to throw upon all human conduct. In fact, that blame applies not to individuals, but to the system; and that system is proved to be bad;—hurtful to the interests of the country, corrupting to the people, injurious to honest principle, and at the very best a clumsy contrivance for carrying on the affairs of the State.

It is partly the result of our monarchical constitution, in which the prince must rule by influence rather than prerogative; but it is much more to be derived from the aristocratical portion of the constitution. The great families in their struggles with each other and against the Crown, have recourse to Party leagues, and the people are from time to time drawn into the conflict. The evils which flow from this manner of conducting public affairs are manifest. The two greatest unquestionably are, first, the loss of so many able men to the service of the country as well as the devotion of almost the whole powers of all leading men to party contests and the devotion of a portion of those men to obstructing the public service instead of helping it; and next, the sport which in playing the party game, is made of the most sacred principles, the duping of the people, and the assumption of their aristocratic leaders to dictate their opinions to them. It is a sorry account of any political machine that it is so constructed, as only to be kept in order by the loss of power and the conflict of forces which the first of these faults implies. It is a clumsy and unwieldy movement which can only be effected by the combined operation of jarring principles, which the panegyrists or rather apologists of these ano-

malies have commended. But it is a radical vice in any system to exclude the people from forming their own opinions, which must, if proceeding from their own impulses, be kept in strict accordance with their interests, that is with the general good; and it is a flaw if possible still more disastrous, to render the people only tools and instruments of an oligarchy, instead of making their power the main-spring of the whole engine, and their interest the grand object of all its operations.

Of this we may be well assured, that as Party has hitherto been known amongst us, it can only be borne during the earlier stages of a nation's political growth. While the people are ignorant of their interests, and as little acquainted with their rights as with their duties, they may be treated by the leading factions as they have hitherto been treated by our own. God be praised, they are not now what they were in the palmy days of factious aristocracy, of the Walpoles, and the Foxes, and the Pelhams—never consulted, and never thought of unless when it was desirable that one mob should bawl out "Church and King," and another should echo back "No Pope, and no Pretender." They have even made great advances since the close of the American war, and the earlier periods of the French Revolution, when, through fear of the Catholics, the library of Lord Mansfield, and through hatred of the Dissenters, the apparatus of Dr. Priestley, were committed to the flames. Their progress is now rapid, and their success assured in the attainment of all that can qualify them for self-government, emancipate them from pupilage, and entitle them to undertake the management of their own affairs. Nor will they any more suffer leading men to make up their opi-

nions for them, as doctors do the prescriptions which they are to take, or consent to be the tools and the dupes of party any more.

Let us now by way of contrast rather than comparison, turn our eye towards some eminent leaders of mankind in countries where no Party spirit can ever be shown, or in circumstances where a great danger threatening all alike, excludes the influence of faction altogether, though only for a season, and while the pressure continues.

Contemporary with George III., and with the statesmen whose faint likenesses we have been surveying, were some of the most celebrated persons whom either the old or the new world have produced. Their talents and their fortunes came also in conflict with those of our own rulers, upon some of the most memorable occasions which have exercised the one or affected the other. It will form no inappropriate appendix to the preceding sketches, if we now endeavour to portray several of those distinguished individuals.

FRANKLIN.

FRANKLIN.

ONE of the most remarkable men certainly of our times as a politician, or of any age as a philosopher, was Franklin; who also stands alone in combining together these two characters, the greatest that man can sustain, and in this, that having borne the first part in enlarging science by one of the greatest discoveries ever made, he bore the second part in founding one of the greatest empires in the world.

In this truly great man every thing seems to concur that goes towards the constitution of exalted merit. First he was the architect of his own fortune. Born in the humblest station, he raised himself by his talents and his industry, first to the place in society which may be attained with the help only of ordinary abilities, great application and good luck; but next to the loftier heights which a daring and happy genius alone can scale; and the poor Printer's boy who at one period of his life had no covering to shelter his head from the dews of night, rent in twain the proud dominion of England, and lived to be the Ambassador of a Commonwealth which he had formed, at the Court of the haughty Monarchs of France who had been his allies.

Then, he had been tried by prosperity as well as adverse fortune, and had passed unhurt through the perils of both. No ordinary apprentice, no common-place journeyman, ever laid the foundations of his independence in

habits of industry and temperance more deep than he did, whose genius was afterwards to rank him with the Galileos and the Newtons of the old world. No patrician born to shine in Courts, or assist at the Councils of Monarchs, ever bore his honours in a lofty station more easily, or was less spoilt by the enjoyment of them than this common workman did when negotiating with Royal representatives, or caressed by all the beauty and fashion of the most brilliant Court in Europe.

Again, he was self-taught in all he knew. His hours of study were stolen from those of sleep and of meals, or gained by some ingenious contrivance for reading while the work of his daily calling went on. Assisted by none of the helps which affluence tenders to the studies of the rich, he had to supply the place of tutors, by redoubled diligence, and of commentaries, by repeated perusal. Nay, the possession of books was to be obtained by copying what the art which he himself exercised furnished easily to others.

Next, the circumstances under which others succumb he made to yield, and bent to his own purposes—a successful leader of a revolt that ended in complete triumph after appearing desperate for years; a great discoverer in philosophy without the ordinary helps to knowledge; a writer famed for his chaste style without a classical education; a skilful negotiator, though never bred to politics; ending as a favourite, nay, a pattern of fashion, when the guest of frivolous Courts, the life which he had begun in garrets and in workshops.

Lastly, combinations of faculties in others deemed impossible, appeared easy and natural in him. The

philosopher, delighting in speculation, was also eminently a man of action. Ingenious reasoning, refined and subtle consultation, were in him combined with prompt resolution, and inflexible firmness of purpose. To a lively fancy, he joined a learned and deep reflection; his original and inventive genius stooped to the convenient alliance of the most ordinary prudence in everyday affairs; the mind that soared above the clouds, and was conversant with the loftiest of human contemplations, disdained not to make proverbs and feign parables for the guidance of apprenticed youths and servile maidens; and the hands that sketched a free constitution for a whole continent, or drew down the lightning from heaven, easily and cheerfully lent themselves to simplify the apparatus by which truths were to be illustrated, or discoveries pursued.

His whole course both in acting and in speculation was simple and plain, ever preferring the easiest and the shortest road, nor ever having recourse to any but the simplest means to compass his ends. His policy rejected all refinements, and aimed at accomplishing its purposes by the most rational and obvious expedients. His language was unadorned, and used as the medium of communicating his thoughts, not of raising admiration; but it was pure, expressive, racy. His manner of reasoning was manly and cogent, the address of a rational being to others of the same order; and so concise, that preferring decision to discussion, he never exceeded a quarter of an hour in any public address. His correspondence upon business, whether private or on state affairs, is a model of clearness and compendious shortness; nor can any state papers surpass in dignity and

impression, those of which he is believed to have been the author in the earlier part of the American revolutionary war. His mode of philosophising was the purest application of the Inductive principle, so eminently adapted to his nature, and so clearly dictated by common sense, that we can have little doubt it would have been suggested by Franklin, if it had not been unfolded by Bacon, though it is as clear that in this case it would have been expounded in far more simple terms. But of all this great man's scientific excellencies, the most remarkable is the smallness, the simplicity, the apparent inadequacy, of the means which he employed in his experimental researches. His discoveries were made with hardly any apparatus at all; and if, at any time, he had been led to employ instruments of a somewhat less ordinary description, he never rested satisfied until he had, as it were, afterwards translated the process, by resolving the problem with such simple machinery, that you might say he had done it wholly unaided by apparatus. The experiments by which the identity of lightning and electricity was demonstrated, were made with a sheet of brown paper, a bit of twine, a silk thread, and an iron key.

Upon the integrity of this great man, whether in public or in private life, there rests no stain. Strictly honest, and even scrupulously punctual in all his dealings, he preserved in the highest fortune that regularity which he had practised as well as inculcated in the lowest. The phrase which he once used when interrupted in his proceedings upon the most arduous and important affairs, by a demand of some petty item in a long account,—"Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treads out the

corn,"—has been cited against him as proving the laxity of his dealings when in trust of public money ; it plainly proves the reverse ; for he well knew that in a country abounding in discussion, and full of bitter personal animosities, nothing could be gained of immunity by refusing to produce his vouchers at the fitting time ; and his venturing to use such language demonstrates that he knew his conduct to be really above all suspicion.

In domestic life he was faultless, and in the intercourse of society, delightful. There was a constant good humour and a playful wit, easy and of high relish, without any ambition to shine, the natural fruit of his lively fancy, his solid, natural good sense, and his cheerful temper, that gave his conversation an unspeakable charm, and alike suited every circle, from the humblest to the most elevated. With all his strong opinions, so often solemnly declared, so imperishably recorded in his deeds, he retained a tolerance for those who differed with him which could not be surpassed in men whose principles hang so loosely about them as to be taken up for a convenient cloak, and laid down when found to impede their progress. In his family he was every thing that worth, warm affections, and sound prudence could contribute, to make a man both useful and amiable, respected and beloved. In religion, he would by many be reckoned a latitudinarian ; yet it is certain that his mind was imbued with a deep sense of the Divine perfections, a constant impression of our accountable nature, and a lively hope of future enjoyment. Accordingly, his death-bed, the test of both faith and works, was easy and placid, resigned and devout, and indicated



FREDERIC II.

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IN one particular this celebrated Prince may be said to resemble the great Republican. His earlier years were spent in the school of adversity. Whether the influence of this discipline, usually so propitious to the character of great men, was exerted in chastening his principles, and in calling forth and regulating those feelings which the education of a court tends either to stifle or pervert, may be learnt not only from the private history of his reign, but from some anecdotes preserved, of his conduct immediately after he came to the crown; while as yet, his heart could not have become callous from the habits of uncontrolled dominion, nor his principles unsettled by the cares of his turbulent career. When William discovered his son's plan for escaping from Prussia, he caused him to be arrested, together with his confidential friend De Catt, and instantly brought to trial before a military commission. The interposition of Austria alone saved the prince's life; but he was thrown into prison at the fort of Custrin, where his friend was beheaded on a scaffold raised before his apartment to the level of the window, from which he was forced to view this afflicting spectacle. He was so much overpowered, that he sunk senseless into the chair which had been placed to keep him at the window, and only recovered to bewail, with every appearance of the most poignant feeling, the fate of this unhappy

young man, who had fallen a sacrifice to his faithful attachment. The savage conduct of William, indeed, left him scarce any other occupation; his confinement was as strict, and his treatment as harsh as that of the meanest felon. By degrees, however, his guards watched him less closely, and he was even permitted to steal out under cover of night, by circuitous paths, to a chateau in the neighbourhood, the residence of a very amiable nobleman's family, who received him with the greatest kindness, and exposed themselves to constant risk on his account. Among them he spent as much of his time, for above a year, as he could gain from the humanity or treachery of his jailor. It was chiefly with music and reading that he consoled himself in the gloom of his prison; and those good folks not only furnished him with books and candles, but made little concerts for him in the evenings, when he could escape to enjoy their society. The young Wrechs (for that was the name of this family) were sufficiently accomplished and sprightly to gain Frederic's esteem. He delighted much in their company; and though they were so numerous, that the baron was kept in narrow circumstances by the necessary expenses of their maintenance and education, he contrived, by straitening himself still more, to scrape together supplies of money to the amount of above six thousand rixdollars, with which he assisted, from time to time, his royal guest.

Such were the obligations which Frederic owed, during this eventful period of his life, first to the House of Austria, whose spirited and decisive interference saved him from the scaffold; next, to the unfortunate De Catt, who had sacrificed his life in the attempt to aid his es-

cape; and, lastly, to the amiable family of the Wrechs, who, at the imminent risk of their lives, and at a certain expense little suited to their moderate circumstances, had tenderly alleviated the hardships of his confinement. As Frederic mounted the throne a short time after he was set at liberty, we might naturally expect that the impression of favours like these would outlive the ordinary period of royal memory. The first act of his reign was to invade the hereditary dominions of Austria, and reduce to the utmost distress the daughter and representative of the monarch whose timely interposition had saved his life, by heading a powerful combination against her, after stripping her of an invaluable province. The family and relations of De Catt never received, during the whole of his reign, even a smile of royal favour. To the Wrechs he not only never repaid a creutzer of the money which they had pinched themselves to raise for his accommodation, but manifested a degree of coldness amounting to displeasure: so that this worthy and accomplished family were in a kind of disgrace during his time, never received well at court, nor promoted to any of the employments which form in some sort the patrimony of the aristocracy. They were favoured by Prince Henry; and all that they could boast of owing to the king was, to use an expression of his most zealous panegyrist, that "*he did not persecute them*" on account of his brother's patronage. His defenders screened this ungrateful conduct behind the Prussian law, which prohibits the loan of money to princes of the blood, and declares all debts contracted by them null. But since the king was to govern himself by the enactments of this law, it would have been well if the prince, too, had considered

them. We have heard of Lewis XII. proudly declaring that it was unworthy the King of France to revenge the wrongs of the Duke of Orleans. It was reserved for the unfeeling meanness of Frederic to show us, that the King was not bound by the highest obligations of the Prince of Prussia—that he could shelter himself from the claims of honour and gratitude, by appealing to laws which had been generously violated in his behalf.

But it may be fair to mention the solitary instance of a contrary description, which we can find in comparing his conduct on the throne with the favours received during his misfortunes. He had been assisted in his musical relaxations at Potsdam by the daughter of a citizen, who, without any personal charms, had the accomplishment most valuable to the Prince, secluded as he was from all society, and depending for amusement almost entirely on his flute. His father no sooner heard of this intimacy, than he supposed there must be some criminal intercourse between the young amateurs, and proceeded to meet the tender passion by the universal remedy which he was in the habit of administering to his subjects. The lady was seized, delivered over to the executioner, and publicly whipped through the streets of Potsdam. The cruel disgrace, of course, put an end to the concerts, and to her estimation in society. When Frederic came to the throne, she was reduced to the humble station of a hackney-coachman's wife; and, with a rare effort of gratitude and generosity, he was pleased to settle upon her a pension, of very little less than thirty-five pounds a-year.

There is nothing in the history of his after life

that shows any improvement in the feelings with which he began it, and which his own sufferings had not chastened, nor the kindness that relieved them, softened. In one of his battles, happening to turn his head round, he saw his nephew, the Hereditary Prince, fall to the ground, his horse being killed under him. Frederic, thinking the rider was shot, cried, without stopping as he rode past, "Ah! there's the Prince of Prussia killed; let his saddle and bridle be taken care of!"

William Augustus, the King's elder brother, and heir apparent to the crown, had for many years been his principal favourite. He was a prince of great abilities, and singularly amiable character—modest almost to timidity—and repaying the friendship of Frederic by a more than filial devotion. He had served near his person in all his campaigns, had constantly distinguished himself in war, and, after the disastrous battle of Collin, was entrusted with the command of half the retreating army. While the King succeeded in bringing off his own division safe into Saxony, the Prince, attacked on all hands by the whole force of the Austrians, suffered several inconsiderable losses on his march, and gained the neighbourhood of Dresden with some difficulty. He was received, as well as his whole staff, with the greatest marks of displeasure. For several days the King spoke to none of them; and then sent a message by one of his generals—" *Que pour bien faire, il devoit leur faire trancher la tête, excepter au general Winterfeldt.*" The Prince was of too feeling a disposition not to suffer extremely from this treatment. He addressed a letter to the King, in which he stated that the fatigues of the campaign, and his distress of mind, had

totally injured his health; and received for answer a permission to retire, couched in the most bitter and humiliating reproaches. From this time he lived entirely in the bosom of his family, a prey to the deepest melancholy, but retaining for the King his sentiments of warm attachment, and respect bordering upon veneration, although never permitted to approach his person. One interview only brought the brothers together after their unhappy separation. The different members of the Royal family, during the most disastrous period of the Seven years' war, when the existence of the house of Brandenburg seemed to depend on a diminution in the number of its enemies, united their voice in exhorting the King to attempt making such a peace with France and Sweden as might be consistent with the honour of his crown. Prince William was entreated to lay their wishes before him; and, oppressed as he was with disease, trembling to appear in his brother's presence, scarcely daring to hope even a decorous reception, he yet thought his duty required this effort, and he supplicated an audience. Frederic allowed him to detail fully his whole views, and was willing to hear from him the unanimous prayers of his relations. He appeared before the King; besought him, conjured him, with tears in his eyes, and embraced his knees with all the warmth of fraternal affection, and all the devotion of the most enthusiastic loyalty. No sentiment of pity for the cause he pleaded, nor any spark of his own ancient affection was kindled in Frederic's bosom at so touching a scene. He remained silent and stern during the whole interview, and then put an end to it by these words: "*Monsieur, vous partirez demain pour Berlin: allez faire des*

enfants: vous n'êtes bon qu'à cela." The Prince did not long survive this memorable audience.

Such was the fate of his favourite brother. The Princess Amelia was his youngest and most beloved sister. She was one of the most charming and accomplished women in Europe. But after being cajoled by her elder sister, Ulrica, out of a Royal marriage, which that intriguer obtained for herself, Amelia fell in love with the well-known Baron Trenck, who was by her brother shut up in a fortress for ten years; and Frederic daily saw pining away before his eyes his favourite sister, become blind and paralysed with mental suffering, and saw it without a pang or a sigh, much more without a thought of relieving it by ceasing to persecute her friend.

Having contemplated this monarch in the relations of domestic life, it is now fit that we should view him among his friends. Of these, there was absolutely not one whom he did not treat with exemplary harshness, except Jordan, who indeed lived only a few years after Frederic came to the throne, while he was too much occupied with war to allow him time for mixing with that select society, in which he afterwards vainly hoped to enjoy the pleasures of entire equality, and where always, sooner or later, the King prevailed over the companion. Of all his friends, the Marquis d'Argens seems to have been the most cordially and most respectfully attached to his person. In the field he was his constant companion: their time in winter quarters was passed in each other's society. At one time the King had no other confidant; and he it was who turned aside his fixed purpose to commit suicide, when, at the most

desperate crisis of his affairs, life had become unbearable. But D'Argens committed the fault seldom pardoned by any prince, by Frederic never; he acted as if he believed his Royal friend sincere in desiring that they should live on equal terms. The pretext for finally discarding his ancient companion was poor in the extreme. When the marquis consented to come into Frederic's service, and leave his own country, it was upon the express condition that he should have permission to return home when he reached the age of seventy. He had a brother in France, to whom he was tenderly attached, and owed many obligations. As he approached this period of life, his brother prepared a house and establishment for his reception; and nothing was wanting but the king's leave to make him retire from a service to which he was now ill adapted by his years, and rendered aversive by the coldness daily more apparent in the treatment he received. But Frederic, notwithstanding the bargain, and in spite of his diminished attachment to this faithful follower, peremptorily refused to grant his discharge: he allowed him a sort of furlough to see his brother, and took his promise to return in six months. When the visit was paid, and the marquis had arrived at Bourg on his return, the exertions which he made to get back within the stipulated time throw him into a dangerous illness. As soon as the six months expired, Frederic receiving no letter and hearing nothing of him, became violently enraged, and ordered his pensions to be stopped, and his name to be struck off the lists with disgrace. The account of these precipitate measures reached the marquis as he was on the point of continuing his journey

after his recovery. And when he died, the king caused a monument to be raised to his memory, as a proof that he repented of his harsh and hasty proceedings against him.

The treatment which Marshal Schwerin met with for gaining the battle of Molwitz, is well known. In order to execute the manœuvre upon which the victory depended, it was necessary that the king should retire from the field at a moment when success was almost despaired of. He consented, and the tide was turned by the consummate skill of the general. Ever after, Frederic treated him with marked coldness; neglected him as far as the necessity of claiming assistance from his genius would permit; and finally, was the cause of his exposing himself to certain destruction at the battle of Prague, where this great master of the art of war fell undistinguished in the crowd, leaving his family to the neglect of an ungrateful sovereign, and his memory to be honoured by the enemy whom he had conquered.*

After Frederic had quarrelled with Voltaire, he heard of a Chevalier Masson, whose wit and accomplishments were represented as sufficient to replace those which he had just lost by his own vanity and caprice. It was with difficulty that this gentleman could be induced to quit the French service, in which he stood high; and when he arrived at Berlin, though it very soon became apparent that Voltaire's place was not one of those which are so easily supplied, yet he had qualities sufficient to

* The monument erected in the neighbourhood of Prague, upon the spot where the greatest of the Prussian captains fell, was raised by the Emperor Joseph II.

recommend him, and was admitted instantly to the royal circles. A single indiscreet sally of wit ruined him in the king's favour. He retired in disgust to his study, where he lived the life of a hermit for many years, his existence unknown to the world, and the most important of its concerns equally unknown to him. As he had thus sacrificed all his prospects to accept of Frederic's patronage, and had wasted the prime of his life in attending upon his capricious pleasure, it might have been expected that he would at least have been permitted to enjoy his poor pension, so dearly purchased, to the end of his inoffensive days. But after twenty years of seclusion, such as we have described, he had his name suddenly struck from the lists, and his appointments stopped, and was obliged to seek his own country with the savings which his parsimony had enabled him to make.

The same selfish spirit, or carelessness towards the feelings and claims of others, which marked Frederic's conduct to his family and friends, was equally conspicuous in his treatment of inferior dependants, both in the relations of society and of business. In his familiar intercourse with those whom he permitted to approach him, we can find no line steadily drawn for the regulation of his own demeanour, or of theirs. His inclination seems to have been, that he should always maintain the manifest superiority, without owing it in appearance to his exalted station; but as soon as he lost, or was near losing, this first place in a contest upon fair terms, he was ready suddenly to call in the aid of the king. Thus it perpetually happened, that a

conversation begun upon an equal footing, was terminated by a single look of authority from the royal companion. He never failed to indulge his sarcastic humour and high spirits in sallies directed with little delicacy or discrimination against all around him ; and unless he happened to have, at the moment, such answers as might, without any possibility of resistance, crush those whom his railleries had forced into a repartee, he was sure to supply the defect by an appeal to weapons which he alone of the circle could use. It is not describing his behaviour correctly, to say that in the hours of relaxation he was fond of forgetting the monarch, provided his company never forgot him. This would at least have been one general rule, one principle of behaviour to which all might conform as soon as it was made known. But Frederic laid down and took up his sceptre at moments which his guests could never divine ; and, far from insisting that they should always have it in their eyes, it would often have been a ground for his using it to stop the colloquy, if he had perceived them persevere in addressing the sovereign, when he was determined they should talk to a comrade. The only rule then of his society, was entire submission to his caprices ; not merely a passive obedience, but a compliance with every whim and turn of his mind ; sometimes requiring to be met with exertions, sometimes to be received in quiet. That we may form some idea of the nature and extent of this meanness, so poor in one who called himself a Royal Philosopher, it is proper to remark, that all those wits or other dependants with whom he passed his time, were entirely sup-

ported by his pensions ; and that, beside the dangers of a fortress, any resistance was sure to cost them and their families their daily bread.

His ordinary mode of enjoying society was, to send for a few of the philosophers who were always in readiness, either when he dined, or had an hour's leisure from business, which he wished to beguile by the recreations of talking and receiving worship. On one of these occasions, the savans in waiting were, Quintus Icilius* and Thiebault ; and it happened that the king, after giving his opinion at great length, and with his usual freedom, upon the arrangement of Providence, which conceals from mortals the period of their lives, called upon them to urge whatever could be stated in its defence. Quintus, unwarily supposing that he really wished to hear the question discussed, gave a reason, which appears completely satisfactory. The philosopher of Sans-Souci, however, only desired his guests to take the opposite side of the argument, in the conviction that they were not to invalidate his own reasoning. And when Quintus fairly destroyed the force of it, by suggesting, that the certain knowledge of our latter end would infallibly diminish the ardour of our exertions for a considerable period beforehand, the king thought proper to break out into a violent personal invective. " Ici," (says Thiebault, who witnessed the extremely but by no means singular scene,) " la foudre

* This was a Leyden professor, originally named Guichard, who being fond of military science, had been transformed into a colonel of chasseurs by the king ; and then, from his admiration of Julius Cæsar's aid-de-camp, had been ordered to assume the name of Quintus Icilius.

partit aussi subite qu'imprevue." *"Cette façon de juger,"* lui dit le Roi, *"est bonne pour vous, âme de boue et de fange! Mais apprenez, si toutefois vous le pouvez, que ceux qui ont l'âme noble, élevée, et sensible aux charmes de la vertu, ne raisonnent point sur des maximes aussi misérables et aussi honteuses! Apprenez, Monsieur, que l'honnête homme fait toujours le bien tant qu'il peut le faire, et uniquement parce que c'est le bien, sans rechercher quels sont ceux qui en profiteront; mais vous ne sentez point ces choses; vous n'êtes point fait pour les sentir."* Vol. I. p. 84.

At one of his literary entertainments, when, in order to promote free conversation, he reminded the circle that there was no monarch present, and that every one might think aloud, the conversation chanced to turn upon the faults of different governments and rulers. General censures were passing from mouth to mouth, with the kind of freedom which such hints were calculated, and apparently intended, to inspire. But Frederic suddenly put a stop to the topic by these words—*"Paix! paix! Messieurs; prenez garde, voilà le roi que arrive; il ne faut pas qu'il vous entende, car peut-être se croiroit-il obligé d'être encore plus méchant que vous."* V. p. 329.

These sketches may serve to illustrate the conduct of Frederic in society, and to show how far he could forget his power in his familiar intercourse with inferiors. As yet, we have seen only caprice, and that meanness, or, to call it by the right name, cowardice, which consists in trampling upon the fallen, and fighting with those who are bound. His treatment of persons employed in

his service, and his manner of transacting business with them, presents us with equal proofs of a tyrannical disposition, and examples of injustice and cruelty, altogether unparalleled in the history of civilised monarchies. It is well known, that a large proportion of the Prussian army owes its origin to a system of crimping, which the recruiting officers carry on in foreign states, and chiefly in the distant parts of the empire. As Frederic II. did not introduce this odious practice, he might, perhaps, be allowed to escape severe censure for not abolishing it generally ; but there can be only one opinion upon his conduct in those particular cases which came to his knowledge, and where his attention was specifically called to the grievous injuries sustained by individuals. Of the many anecdotes which have been preserved, relative to this point, one sample may suffice. A French captain of cavalry, returning to his native country, after a long absence in the West Indies, was seized, in his journey along the Rhine, by some Prussian recruiting officers ; his servant was spirited away, and he was himself sent to the army as a private soldier, in which capacity he was forced to serve during the rest of the Seven years' war, against the cause, he it remarked, of his own country. In vain he addressed letter after letter to his friends, acquainting them of his cruel situation : the Prussian post-office was too well regulated to let any of these pass. His constant memorials to the King were received indeed, but not answered. After the peace was concluded, he was marched with his regiment into garrison ; and at the next review, the King, coming up to his colonel, inquired if a person named M—— was still in the corps. Upon his being

produced, the King offered him a commission; he declined it, and received his discharge.

It was thus that Frederic obtained, by kidnapping, the troops whom he used in plundering his neighbours. His finances were frequently indebted to similar means for their supply. The King's favourite Secretary M. Galser, by his orders, caused fifteen millions of ducats to be made in a very secret manner, with a third of base metal in their composition. This sum was then entrusted to a son of the Jew Ephraim, so well known in the history of Frederic's coinage, for the purpose of having it circulated in Poland, where it was accordingly employed in buying up every portable article of value that could be found. The Poles, however, soon discovered that they had been imposed upon, and contrived to transfer the loss to their neighbours, by purchasing with the new ducats whatever they could procure in Russia. The Russians, in like manner, found out the cheat, and complained so loudly that the Empress interfered, and made inquiries, which led to a discovery of the quarter whence the issue had originally come. She then ordered the bad money to be brought into her treasury, and exchanged it for good coin. She insisted upon Frederic taking the false ducats at their nominal value, which he did not dare to refuse, but denied that he had any concern in the transaction; and to prove this, sent for his agent Galser, to whom he communicated the dilemma in which he was, and the necessity of giving him up as the author of the imposture. Galser objected to so dishonourable a proposal. The King flew into a passion; kicked him violently on the shins, according to his custom: sent him to the fortress of Spandaw for a year and a half,

and then banished him to a remote village of Mecklenburg.

Frederic acted towards his officers upon a principle the most unjust, as well as unfeeling, that can be imagined. It was his aim to encourage military service among the higher ranks: the commonalty he conceived were adapted for all the meaner employments in the state, and should not occupy those stations in the army which were, he thought, the birthright of the aristocracy. But instead of carrying this view into effect, by the only arrangement which was reconcilable with good faith—establishing a certain standard of rank below which no one should be admitted to hold a commission either in peace or in war—he allowed persons of all descriptions to enter the army as officers, when there was any occasion for their services, and, after the necessity had ceased, dismissed those whose nobility appeared questionable. Thus, nothing could be more terrible to the brave men, who for years had led his troops to victory, or shared in their distresses, than the return of peace. After sacrificing their prospects in life, their best years, their health, with their ease, to the most painful service, and sought, through toils and wounds, and misery, the provision which a certain rank in the profession affords, they were liable, at a moment's warning, to be turned ignominiously out of the army, whose fortunes they had followed, because the king either discovered, or fancied, that their family was deficient in rank.

We shall pass over the extreme jealousy with which Frederic treated all those to whom he was under the necessity of confiding any matters of state. Nothing, in the history of Eastern manners, exceeds the rigorous confine-

ment of the cabinet secretaries. But we shall proceed to an example of the respect which the Justinian of the North, the author of the Frederician code, paid to the persons of those entrusted with the administration of justice in his dominions. This great lawgiver seems never to have discovered the propriety of leaving his judges to investigate the claims of suitors, any more than he could see the advantage of committing to tradesmen and farmers the management of their private affairs. In the progress which he made round the states at the season of the reviews, he used to receive from all quarters the complaints of those who thought themselves aggrieved by the course of justice ; and because he had to consider the whole of these cases in addition to all the other branches of his employment, he concluded that he must be a more competent arbiter than they whose lives are devoted to the settlement of one part of such disputes. In one of his excursions, a miller, a tenant of his own, complained to him that his stream was injured by a neighbouring proprietor ; and the king ordered his chancellor to have the complaint investigated. The suit was brought in form, and judgment given against the miller. Next year, he renewed his application, and affirmed that his narrative of the facts was perfectly true ; yet the court had nonsuited him. The King remitted the cause to the second tribunal, with injunctions to be careful in doing the man justice : he was, however, again cast ; and once more complained bitterly to the king, who secretly sent a major of his army to examine on the spot the question upon which his two highest judicatures had decided, and to report. The gallant officer, who was also a neighbour of the miller, reported in his favour ; and two other

persons, commissioned in the same private manner, returned with similar answers. Frederic immediately summoned his chancellor and the three judges who had determined the cause; he received them in a passion, would not allow them to speak a word in their defence; upbraided them as unjust judges, nay as miscreants; and wrote out with his own hand a sentence in favour of the miller, with full costs, and a sum as damages which he had never claimed. He then dismissed the chancellor from his office, with language too abusive to be repeated; and, after violently kicking the three judges in the shins, pushed them out of his closet, and sent them to prison at the fortress of Spandaw. All the other judges and ministers of justice were clearly of opinion, that the sentence originally given against the miller was a right one, and that the case admitted of no doubt. As for the chancellor, it was universally allowed that the matter came not within his jurisdiction; and that he could not possibly have known any thing of the decision. At last a foreign journalist undertook the investigation of the business; and being placed beyond the limits of the royal philosopher's caprice, he published a statement which left no shadow of argument in the miller's favour. As Frederic attended to what was written abroad, and in French, Linguet's production quickly opened his eyes. Not a word was said in public; none of those measures were adopted, by which a great mind would have rejoiced to acknowledge such errors, and offer some atonement to outraged justice. An irritable vanity alone seemed poorly to regulate the ceremony of propitiation; and he who had been mean enough to insult the persons of his judges in the blind-

ness of anger, could scarcely be expected, after his eyes were opened to show that pride which makes men cease to deserve blame, by avowing, while they atone for, their faults. Orders were *secretly* given to the miller's adversary, that he should not obey the sentence. With the same *secrecy*, a compensation was made to the miller himself. The three judges, after lingering many months in prison, were *quietly* liberated: the chancellor was allowed to remain in disgrace, because he had been most of all injured; and the faithful subjects of his majesty knew too well their duty and his power, to interrupt this paltry silence by any whispers upon what had passed.

If this system of interference, this intermeddling and controlling spirit, thus appeared, even in the judicial department, much more might it be looked for in the other branches of his administration. It was, in truth, the vice of his whole reign; not even suspended in its exercise during war, but raging with redoubled violence, when the comparative idleness of peace left his morbid activity to prey upon itself. If any one is desirous of seeing how certainly a government is unsuccessful in trade and manufactures, he may consult the ~~sketches~~ sketches of this boasted statesmen's speculations in that line, as profitably as the accounts which have been published of the royal works and fabrics in Spain. But there are particulars in the policy of Frederic, exceeding, for absurdity and violence, whatever is to be met with in the descriptions of Spanish political economy. We have only room for running over a few detached examples.—When a china manufactory was to be set a-going at Berlin on the royal account, it was thought necessary to begin by forcing a market for the wares. Accordingly, the Jews,

who cannot marry without the royal permission, were obliged to pay for their licenses by purchasing a certain quantity of the king's cups and saucers at a fixed price.—The introduction of the silk culture was a favourite scheme with Frederic ; and to make silk-worms spin and mulberry-trees grow in the Prussian sands, no expense must be spared. Vast houses and manufactories were built for such as chose to engage in the speculation ; a direct premium was granted on the exportation of silk stuffs ; and medals were awarded to the workmen who produced above five pounds of the article in a year. But nature is very powerful, even among Prussian grenadiers. In the lists of exports we find no mention made of silk, while it forms a considerable and a regular branch of the goods imported.—The settlement of colonists in waste lands was another object of eminent attention and proportionate expense. Foreign families were enticed and transported by the crimps whom he employed all over Europe for recruiting his forces ; they received grants of land ; were provided with houses, implements, and live-stock, and furnished with subsistence, until their farms became sufficiently productive to support them. Frederic called this supplying the blanks which war made in his population.—His rage for encouraging the introduction of new speculations was quite ungovernable. No sooner did his emissaries inform him of any ingenious manufacturer or mechanic, in France or elsewhere, than he bribed him to settle in Berlin, by the most extravagant terms. When he found the success of the project too slow, or its gains, from the necessity of circumstances, fell short of expectation, he had only one way of getting out of the scrape ;—he

broke his bargain with the undertaker, and generally sent him to a fortress; in the course of which transaction, it always happened that somebody interfered, under the character of a minister, a favourite, &c., to pillage both parties. Experience never seemed to correct this propensity. It was at an advanced period of his reign that he sent orders to his ambassadors to find him a general projector—a man who might be employed wholly in fancying new schemes, and discussing those which should be submitted to him. Such a one was accordingly procured, and tempted, by large bribes, to settle at Potsdam.

Frederic's grand instrument in political economy was the establishment of monopolies. Whether an art was to be encouraged, or a public taste modified, or a revenue gleaned, or the balance of trade adjusted, a monopoly was the expedient. Thus the exclusive privilege was granted to one family, of supplying Berlin and Potsdam with firewood; the price was instantly doubled; and the king received no more than eight thousand a year of the profits. Well did the celebrated Helvetius remark of some applications for such contracts, upon which the king demanded his sentiments, "Sire, you need not trouble yourself with reading them through; they all speak the same language—*'We beseech your Majesty to grant us leave to rob your people of such a sum; in consideration of which, we engage to pay you a certain share of the pillage.'*" Frederic was led to conceive that his subjects drank too much coffee in proportion to their means, and ate too little nourishing food. The universal remedy was applied; and the supply of all the coffee used within his

dominions given exclusively to a company. The price was thus, as he had wished, greatly raised, and some of the spoil shared with his treasury ; but the taste of the people remained as determined in favour of coffee as before, and of course was much more detrimental to their living. Tobacco, in like manner, he subjected to a strict monopoly ; and when he wished to have arms furnished very cheap to his troops, he had again recourse to his usual expedient : he conferred upon the house of Daum and Splikberg, armourers, the exclusive privilege of refining sugar, on condition that they should sell him muskets and caps at a very low price. In all his fiscal policy, he was an anxious observer of the balance of trade, and never failed to cast a pensive eye upon the tables of exports and imports. " Every year," says one of his panegyrists, " did he calculate with extreme attention the sums which came into his states, and those which went out ; and he saw, with uneasiness, that the balance was not so favourable as it ought to be."* After all his monopolies and premiums for the encouragement of production, he found, it seems, that the exports of his kingdom could not be augmented. " Therefore," adds this author, " he had only one resource left—to diminish the importation ;" which he accordingly attempted, by new monopolies and prohibitions.

It remains, before completing our estimate of Frederic's character, that we should recollect his public conduct in the commonwealth of Europe, where he was born to hold so conspicuous a station. And here, while

* Thiebault, iv. 127.

we wonder at the abilities which led him to success, it is impossible not to admit that they belonged to that inferior order which can brook an alliance with profligacy and entire want of principle. The history of the Prussian monarchy, indeed, is that of an empire scraped together by industry, and fraud, and violence, from neighbouring states. By barter, and conquest, and imposture, its manifold districts have been gradually brought into one dynasty; not a patch of the motley mass, but recalls the venality or weakness of the surrounding powers, and the unprincipled usurpations of the house of Brandenburg. But it was Frederic II. whose strides, far surpassing those of his ancestors, raised his family to the rank of a primary power; enabled him to baffle the coalition which his ambition had raised against him; and gave the means of forming, himself, a new conspiracy for the destruction of whatever principles had been held most sacred by the potentates of modern times. It is in vain that we dissemble with ourselves, and endeavour to forget our own conduct at that fatal crisis. We may rail at Jacobinism, and the French Revolution—impute to the timidity of the other powers the insolent dominion of Republican France—and exhaust our effeminate license of tongue upon the chief, who, by wielding her destinies, made himself master of half the world. Europe suffered by, and is still suffering for the partition of Poland. Then it was, that public principles were torn up and scattered before the usurpers of the day;—then it was, that England and France poorly refused to suspend their mutual animosities, and associate in support of right, when other states, forgetting greater jealousies, were com-

bined to violate the law;—then it was, that power became the measure of duty—that ambition learnt all the lessons which it has since been practising of *arroi-dissements*, and equivalents, and indemnities—that an assurance of impunity and success was held out to those who might afterwards abandon all principle, provided they were content with a share of the plunder, and that the lesson was learnt which the settlers of Europe practised in 1814 and 1815, the lesson which they are again practising in 1839, of transferring from the weak to the strong whatever portions of the territory it may please them to take, without consulting the wishes of the inhabitants more than the cattle that drag the plough through their fields. While we look back with detestation, then, on the conduct of those powers who perpetrated the crime, and most of all on Frederic who contrived it, let us also reflect, with shame, on the pusillanimity of those who saw, yet helped not; and, in justice to the memory of a truly great man, let us bear in mind, that he who afterwards warned us against the usurpations of France at their nearer approach, raised his voice against the dereliction of principle which paved the way for them in the Partition of Poland.*

The details into which we have entered, as descriptive of Frederic's character, may seem to be out of keeping in a sketch like this. But the universal belief of his greatness, and the disposition to exalt his merits because of the success which followed his ambition, renders it necessary to reduce those merits to their true dimensions, which no general description could effect.

* Mr. Burke.

Upon the whole, all well-regulated minds will turn from a minute view of this famous personage, impressed with no veneration for his character, either as a member of society, a ruler of the people, or a part of the European community. That he possessed the talents of an accomplished warrior, and an elegant wit, it would be absurd to deny, and superfluous to demonstrate. He has left us, in his victories and his writings, the best proofs; and all that is preserved of his conversation leads to a belief that it surpassed his more careful efforts. He ranked unquestionably in the first class of warriors; nor is it doubtful that the system by which, when carried to its full extent, Napoleon's victories were gained, had its origin in the strategy of Frederic,—the plan, namely, of rapidly moving vast masses of troops, and always bringing a superior force to bear upon the point of attack. His administration, whether military or civil, was singularly marked by promptitude and energy. Wherever active exertion was required, or could secure success, he was likely to prevail; and as he was in all things a master of those inferior abilities which constitute what we denominate address, it is not wonderful that he was uniformly fortunate in the cabinets of his neighbours. The encouragements which he lavished on learned men were useful, though not always skilfully bestowed; and in this, as in all the departments of his government, we see him constantly working mischief by working too much. His Academy was no less under command than the best disciplined regiment in his service; and did not refuse to acknowledge his authority upon matters of scientific opinion or of taste in the arts. His own literary ac-

quirements were limited to the *belles lettres* and moral sciences; even of these he was far from being completely master. His practice, as an administrator, is inconsistent with an extensive or sound political knowledge; and his acquaintance with the classics was derived from French translations; he knew very little Latin, and no Greek. To his sprightliness in society, and his love of literary company, so rare in princes, he owes the reputation of a philosopher; and to the success of his intrigues and his arms, the appellation of Great: a title which is the less honourable, that mankind have generally agreed to bestow it upon those to whom their gratitude was least of all due.

GUSTAVUS III.

GUSTAVUS III.

THE nephew of Frederic II. was Gustavus III. of Sweden, and he is certainly entitled to rank among the more distinguished men of his age. It was the saying of Frederic, "My nephew is an extraordinary person; he succeeds in all he undertakes;" and considering the difficulties of his position, the adverse circumstances in which some of his enterprises were attempted, his success amply justified the panegyric at the time it was pronounced, and before the military disasters of his reign.

He was born with a great ambition to distinguish, both his country among the nations of Europe and himself among her sovereigns. Inflamed with the recollection of former Swedish monarchs, and impatient of the low position to which the ancient renown of his country had fallen through a succession of feeble princes, he formed the project of relieving the crown from the trammels imposed upon it by an overwhelming aristocracy, as the only means by which the old glories of Sweden could be revived, and the influence of the Gustavuses and the Charleses restored. The king of the country, indeed, when he ascended the throne was its sovereign only in name. He had all the responsibility of the government cast upon him; he had all its weight resting upon his shoulders; he had all the odium of executing the laws to suppress sedition, to

levy taxes, to punish offenders. But neither in making those laws, nor in guiding the policy of the state, nor in administering its resources, had he any perceptible influence whatever. The crown was a mere pageant of state, wholly destitute of power, and only supposed to exist because the multitude, accustomed to be governed by kings, required acts of authority to be promulged in the royal name, and because it was convenient to have some quarter upon which the blame of all that was unpopular in the conduct of the government might rest. The real power of the state was certainly in the hands of the Aristocracy, who ruled, through the medium of the States, an assembly of nominal representatives of the country in which the order of the nobles alone bore sway. The Senate in fact governed the country. In them was vested almost all the patronage of the state; they could compel meetings of the Diet at any time; they even claimed the command of the army, and issued their orders to the troops without the king's consent.

When Gustavus was abroad on his travels, being then about 22 years of age, his father died, and from Paris, where the intelligence reached him, he addressed a Declaration filled with the most extravagant expressions of devotion to the constitution, zeal for the liberties of his people, and abhorrence of every thing tending towards absolute government, or what in Sweden is termed "Sovereignty;" for the Swedes, like the Romans, regarded monarchy, except in name, as equivalent to tyranny. He vowed that "deeming it his chiefest glory to be the first citizen of a free state" he should regard all those "as his worst enemies who, being traitorous to the country, should upon any pretext what-

ever seek to introduce unlimited royal authority into Sweden," and he reminded the States of the oath which he had solemnly sworn to the constitution. Those who read this piece were struck with the overdone expressions in which it was couched ; and profound observers did not hesitate to draw conclusions wholly unfavourable to the sincerity of the royal author. On his arrival in Sweden, whither he was in little haste to return, he renewed the same vows of fealty to the existing constitution ; signed the articles of the Capitulation tendered by the States in the usual form, articles which left him the name of king and the shadow of royal authority ; absolved the States and his subjects from their allegiance should he depart from his engagements, and menaced with his " utmost wrath all who should dare to propose a single degree of addition to the present power or splendour of the crown." At his Coronation, which was postponed to the next year, he volunteered an additional display of gratuitous hypocrisy and fraud, when, having taken the oaths to the constitution, he exclaimed " Unhappy the king who wants the tie of oaths to secure himself on the throne, and, unable to reign in the hearts of his people, is forced to rule by legal constraint !"

Thus did this accomplished dissembler contrive, for above a year and a half, to keep up the appearance of a constitutional king, while in all his works and actions he affected the republican, and even overdid the part. At length his preparations being completed, he cast the mask away, excited an insurrection of troops in two distant fortresses to distract the senate's attention, and having gained over the regiments in the capital, secured the persons of the senators, assembled

the other Estates in a hall surrounded with soldiery, and against which guns were planted and men stationed with lighted matches, while he dictated a new constitution vesting absolute power in the crown, and annihilating the influence of both the nobility and the representatives of the people. This outrageous act of combined treachery and violence he concluded as he had begun with the mockery of oaths, and the most extravagant cant of piety. He swore to the new constitution; he invoked the Divine blessings on it in a hypocritical prayer; and he ended by ordering all present to sing a psalm, of which he gave out the first line and led the air. Certainly so gross an instance of sustained falsehood and fraud, in all its departments, was never either before or since exhibited by any even of the royal hypocrites who have at various times encroached, by stratagem and by perjury, upon the liberties of mankind.

It is fit that the history of this transaction should be set forth in its own hateful colours, because it both was at the time, and has been since, made the subject of great panegyric among the admirers of successful crime. Mankind will never be without oppressors as long as they act against their own best interests by conspiring against those of virtue, and make impostors of statesmen and tyrants of princes by transferring to success the praise that should be reserved for virtue, venerating fortune rather than prudence, and defrauding the wise and the good of their just applause, or suffering it to be shared with the profligate and the daring. A premium is thus held out for unscrupulous violence and unprincipled fraud, when the failure of the worst and the best designs is alone and alike condemned, and the

means by which success is achieved are lost sight of in the false lustre that surrounds it.

But tried by a far lower standard than that of public virtue, the conduct of Gustavus manifestly fails. If nothing could more betray a base disposition than his consummate hypocrisy, so nothing could more show a paltry mind than the practising his fraudulent pretences when they were wholly unnecessary for his purpose. He might have plotted the overthrow of the constitution just as safely and with quite as much chance of success had he accepted the constitution in the ordinary way, and signed the usual Capitulation as a matter of course. No one objected to his title; while his father yet lived he had been acknowledged the next heir; his succession was certain on his father's death; and if any thing could have directed suspicion to his hidden designs it was the pains he took, by his extravagant professions of zealous devotion to Liberty, to show that he was plotting against her. He had nothing to do but to plan his operations in secret, and in secret to obtain the support of the four or five regiments by which he effected his purpose. All his vile canting, both in the declaration from Paris, and in the speech on swearing to the constitution, was utterly useless; it only showed a petty understanding as well as a corrupt heart.

Truly he was a profligate man in every sense of the word. He delighted in cunning for cunning's sake. He preferred accomplishing his ends by trick, and the more tricky any course was the more dexterous he thought his pursuit of it, and the better he liked it. His abilities were unquestionable, but they were on a paltry

scale; his resolution was undoubted, but he was placed in circumstances which enabled him to avoid running any great risks; for nothing can be more unwieldy than a Senate of sixty or seventy persons as directing a military force; and the mob was for him and against them. That he shewed great coolness through the whole affair is not denied. He quietly effected the Revolution on the 21st of August, and retired to a country seat twenty miles from Stockholm, Ekolsund, afterwards the property of a Scotch gentleman, named Seton, whom he ennobled. We have seen there a line or two written by him on the window-shutter, with the above date, and purporting that, "On this day, he had come there after the Revolution." When the supreme power was lodged in his own hands, although he maintained it without even a struggle, and afterwards still further extended it by a second breach of the constitution (which in 1772 he had as solemnly sworn to maintain, as he had the one which he then overthrew), yet there was nothing enlarged or successful in his administration of public affairs, nothing in his policy which showed an enlightened or well-informed any more than a liberal mind. Supporting an East India Company, and prohibiting the use of coffee under severe penalties to encourage their trade in tea, or prohibiting French brandy to protect the distillation of a very bad spirit from corn, were the greatest reach of his genius for economical improvements; while, by his military expenditure and his fraudulent tampering first with the coin and afterwards with the paper currency, which he issued in excess, he so reduced the standard, that soon after his death it was at a discount of nearly

50 per cent. below par. The bank paper kept its value; but with this he managed to interfere, and in a manner so scandalous that the history of royal profligacy presents no second example of any thing so mean and base. An extensive forgery was committed in Hamburg or Altona upon the Stockholm Bank by parties whom he employed and then gave up. The Bank having detected it in time was saved from ruin, though impoverished; and the agents in the infamous plot reaped the usual reward of those who suffer themselves to be made the instruments in the villanies of princes; they were punished because their principal was beyond the reach of the law, and they wandered abroad exiles for the rest of their days.

In his military capacity he showed talents of considerable extent, though, as in other respects, not of the first order. He was active, enterprising, prodigal of his person: but so little measuring his designs by his means, that he obtained for himself the reputation of being a restless prince rather than the fame of a considerable warrior; and so little equal to form great and happy and well-considered combinations, that he never went beyond daring and brilliant failures. The absolute influence of Russia under the Aristocratic government having been put an end to by the Revolution, ever after 1772 Catherine was plotting to regain her ascendant, or to obtain by force a still more undisputed sway over Swedish affairs. To all her intrigues Gustavus was alive, and often succeeded in counteracting them; to all her insidious proposals he was deaf, seeing through their real object, as when she would have inveigled him into a partition of Denmark, Norway to become Russian,

and Jutland with the Islands Swedish, he made answer, that "She should not put her arm round his neck to strangle him." Indeed there can be little doubt that she only wished to draw him into a snare by obtaining his consent, that she might betray him to Denmark, and join with her in destroying him. When, therefore, the terms on which these two profligate Sovereigns were with each other had become as unfriendly as possible, and he found Russia engaged on the side of Turkey in a very difficult warfare, he seized the opportunity of attacking her, and sailed with a fleet up the gulf of Finland, so as to threaten Petersburg by his approach. His first operations were successful, though on a small scale, and in a degree far from decisive. A battle was then fought in circumstances so adverse to any such operation, that it seemed as much contrary to nature in a physical as in a moral view; for the channel was narrow, studded with islands, broken with rocks at every step, and defying all nautical skill to steer through unless with favouring weather, and without any other occupation than that of seamanship. Yet here did the hostile fleets engage for many hours, with immense slaughter on both sides, and so balanced a result, that each claimed the victory. The Russians, however, being greatly superior in numbers, kept the sea afterwards, and the Swedes retreated. An opposition in the Senate interposed new obstacles to Gustavus's projects, and he treated this with his wonted vigour. Appealing for support to the other orders, and then surrounding that refractory and disaffected body with troops on whose fidelity he could rely, he arrested five and thirty of them, and abolished the Senate by a sudden change of his own

constitution, and a new violation of his most solemn engagements. His next campaign was thus freed from political embarrassment, but it was throughout disastrous. Defeated by sea, on shore he was still more unfortunate; his army, officers as well as men, refused to obey him; and he was reduced to the deplorable expedient, easily suggested by the rooted falseness of his nature, of amusing the people with fictitious accounts of his proceedings; but his fictions were so clumsy that their self-contradictions betrayed their origin, and the honest Prince of Nassau was induced to complain formally of such a proceeding, bluntly and ineffectually reminding the monarch that such gross and apparent falsehoods were wholly unworthy a man who was always desirous of playing the warrior and the hero.

In these disastrous scenes, from the consequence of which Sweden did not recover for many years, and the effects of which long survived their author, it is admitted on all hands that his abilities were advantageously shown, but above all, that his courage was uniformly displayed in an eminent degree. It is doubtful if any capacity could have made up for the vast disparity of strength between the two parties who were thus matched in such unequal combat; but he often succeeded where an ordinary man would never have ventured; and although he could not be said to display first-rate talents for war, he yet had no reason to be ashamed of the part he played in its operations.

In private life his profligacy was of the grossest description; and with the same preposterous folly which made him prefer the most crooked paths in order to show his cunning, he thought that his grand object of civilising

his dominions could be accomplished by patronising the introduction of foreign vices from other climates among the hardy and sober children of the North. He was, however, a patron of the fine arts; greatly improved the architecture of his capital; established an opera on a respectable scale; and encouraged some excellent artists, of whom Sergel, the sculptor, was the most eminent.

His personal accomplishments were considerable; his information was much above that of ordinary princes; and though he never attempted so much as his uncle of Prussia, nor possessed equally the superficial kind of learning which that prince prided himself upon, he certainly wrote a great deal better, or rather less badly, and probably was not really his inferior in a literary point of view. His manners and address were extremely engaging, and he was greatly above the folly of standing on the dignity of his station, as his liberal, literary uncle, Frederic, always did; who, willing enough to pass for a wit among kings, was always ready enough to be a king among wits, so that when the wit was beaten in fair argument, he might call in the king to his assistance. Gustavus, though a far inferior person in other respects, was greatly above such mean vanity as this; ever showed sufficient confidence in his own resources to meet his company upon equal terms; and having once begun the discussion by admitting them to the same footing with himself, scorned to change his ground or his character, and substitute authority for argument or for repartee. It was the observation of a man well versed in courts, and who had seen much of all the princes of his time,* that Gustavus

* Sir Robert Liston.

III. was almost the only one of them who would have been reckoned a clever man in society had he been born a subject.

The same spirit which he showed in the field, and in his political measures, he displayed equally in the various attempts made upon his life. The arsenals and museums of Stockholm have several deadly instruments preserved in them, which were aimed at his person; and in no instance did he ever lose his presence of mind, or let the attempt be known, which by some extraordinary accident had failed. At last he fell by an assassin's hand. For some mysterious reason, apparently unconnected with political matters, an officer named Ankerstroem, not a noble or connected with the nobility, shot him in the back at a masquerade. The ground of quarrel apparently was personal: different accounts, some more discreditable to the monarch than others, are given of it; but nothing has been ascertained on sufficient evidence; and these are subjects upon which no public end is served by collecting or preserving conjectures. To dwell upon them rather degrades history into gossiping or tale-bearing, and neither explains men's motives, nor helps us to weigh more accurately the merits of their conduct any more than to ascertain its springs.

The story of the fortunes of this prince presents no unimportant lesson to statesmen of the relative value of those gifts which they are wont most to prize, and the talents which they are fondest of cultivating. A useful moral may also be drawn from the tale of so many fine endowments being thrown away, and failing to earn an enduring renown, merely because they

were unconnected with good principles, and unaccompanied by right feelings. The qualities which he possessed, or improved, or acquired, were the most calculated to strike the vulgar, and to gain the applause of the unreflecting multitude. Brave, determined, gifted as well with political courage as with personal valour, quick of apprehension, capable of application, patient of fatigue, well informed on general subjects, elegant, lively, and agreeable in society, affable, relying on his merits in conversation, and overbearing with his rank none that approached him—who so well fitted to win all hearts, if common popularity were his object, or to gain lasting fame if he had chosen to build upon such foundations a superstructure of glorious deeds? But not content with being prudent and politic, he must affect the power of being able to deceive all mankind; wise only by halves, he must mistake cunning for sagacity; perverted in his taste by vanity, he must prefer out-witting men by trickery to overcoming them by solid reason or by fair designs; posterously thinking that the greater the treachery the deeper the policy, he must overlay all his schemes with superfluous hypocrisy and dissimulation. Even his courage availed him little; because looking only to the outside of things, and provident only for the first step, he never profoundly formed his plans, nor ever thought of suiting his measures to his means. Thus in war he left the reputation only of failure and defeat; nor did the fame which he acquired by his successful political movements long outlive him, when men saw to how little account he was capable of turning the power which he had been fortunate enough to obtain by

his bold and managing spirit. For many years men observing the contrast which he presented to other princes in his personal demeanour, and dazzled with the success of his political enterprises, lavished their admiration upon him with little stint, and less reflection; nor would they, had his dominions been more extensive, and his actions performed on a less confined theatre, have hesitated in bestowing upon him the title of "Great," with which they are wont to reward their worst enemies for their worst misdeeds, and to seduce sovereigns into the paths of tyranny and war. But he outlived the fame which he had early acquired. To his victories over the aristocracy at home succeeded his defeats by the enemy abroad. It was discovered that a prince may be more clever and accomplished than others, without being more useful to his people, or more capable of performing great actions; and the wide difference between genius and ability was never more marked than in him. By degrees the eyes, even of his contemporaries were opened to the truth; and then the vile arts of treachery, in which it was his unnatural pride to excel, became as hateful to men of sound principles as his preposterous relish for such bad distinction was disgusting to men of correct taste and right feelings. Of all his reputation, at one time sufficiently brilliant, not any vestige now remains conspicuous enough to tempt others into his crooked paths; and the recollections associated with his story, while they bring contempt upon his name, are only fitted to warn men against the shame that attends lost opportunities and prostituted talents.

THE EMPEROR JOSEPH.

THE EMPEROR JOSEPH.

A GREAT contrast in every respect to Gustavus III. was presented by another Prince who flourished in the same age, Joseph II. In almost all qualities, both of the understanding and the heart, he differed widely from his contemporary of the North. With abilities less shining though more solid, and which he had cultivated more diligently; with far more information acquired somewhat after the laborious German fashion; with so little love for trick or value for his own address, that he rather plumed himself on being a stranger to those arts, and on being defective in the ordinary provision of cunning which the deceitful atmosphere of courts renders almost necessary as a protection against circumvention; with ambition to excel but not confined to love of military glory; with no particular wish to exalt his own authority, nor any indisposition to acquire fame by extending the happiness of his people—although presenting to the vulgar gaze a less striking object than Gustavus, he was in all important particulars a far more considerable person, and wanted but little from nature, though certainly much from fortune, to have left behind him a great and lasting reputation. That which he did want was, however, sufficient to destroy all chance of realising an eminent station among the lights of the world: for his judgment was defective; he was more restless than persevering; and though not

at all wanting in powers of labour, yet he often thought of royal roads to his object, and leaving those steep and circuitous routes which nature has formed along the ascents, would fall into what has been termed by Lord Bacon, the paradox of power—desiring to attain the end without submitting to use the means. Success in such circumstances was hopeless; and accident contributed largely to multiply and exaggerate his failures, inasmuch that the unhappy monarch on his death-bed exclaimed in the anguish of his spirit, that his epitaph should be—"Here lies Joseph, who was unsuccessful in all his undertakings." Men, looking to the event, rated him very far below his real value, and gave him credit for none of the abilities and few of the virtues which he really possessed. Nothing can be more unjust, more foolish in itself or more mischievous in its consequences, than the almost universal determination of the world to reckon nothing in a prince of any value but brilliant talents, and to account worth of little avail in that station in which it is of the most incalculable importance. Nay, let a royal life be ever so much disfigured with crime, if it have nothing mean, that is, if its vices be all on a great scale, and especially if it be covered with military successes, little of the reprobation due to its demerits will be expressed, as if the greatest of public enormities, the excesses of ambition, effected a composition for the worst private faults. Even our James I. is the object of contempt not so much for the vile life he led as for his want of spirit and deficiency in warlike accomplishments; and, if the only one of his failings which was beneficial to his subjects had not existed in his character, his name would have

descended to us with general respect among the Harries and the Edwards of an earlier age.

It was in some degree unfortunate for the fame of Joseph that he came after so able and so celebrated a personage as his mother, Maria Theresa. But this circumstance also proved injurious to his education; for the Empress Queen was resolved that her son, even when clothed by the Election of the Germanic Diet with the Imperial title, should exercise none of its prerogatives during her life; and long after he had arrived at man's estate, he was held in a kind of tutelage by that bold and politic Princess. Having therefore finished his studies, and perceiving that at home he was destined to remain a mere cipher while she ruled, he went abroad, and travelled into those dominions in Italy nominally his own, but where he had no more concern with the government than the meanest of his subjects; and from thence he visited the rest of the Italian states. An eager, but an indiscriminate thirst of knowledge distinguished him wherever he went; there was no subject which he would not master, no kind of information which he would not amass; nor were any details too minute for him to collect. Nothing can be more praiseworthy than a sovereign thus acquainting himself thoroughly with the concerns of the people over whom he is called to rule; and the undistinguishing ardour of his studies can lead to little other harm than the losing time, or preventing the acquisition of important matters by distracting the attention to trifles. But his activity was as indiscriminate as his inquiries, and he both did some harm and exposed himself to much ridicule by the conduct which it prompted.

He must needs visit the convents, and inspect the works of the nuns ; nor rest satisfied until he imposed on those whose needle moved less quickly than suited his notions of female industry, the task of making shirts for the soldiery. So his ambition was equally undistinguishing and unreflecting ; nor did he consider that the things which it led him to imitate might well be void of all merit in him, though highly important in those whose example he was following to the letter regardless of the spirit. Thus, because the Emperor of China encourages agriculture by driving, at some solemn festival, a plough with the hands that holds at other times the celestial sceptre, the Emperor of Germany must needs plough a ridge in the Milanese, where of course a monument was erected to perpetuate this act of princely folly.

But of all his admirations, that which he entertained for the great enemy of his house, his mother, and his crown, was the most preposterous. During the Seven years' war, which threatened the existence of all three, he would fain have served a campaign under Frederic II. ; and although he might probably have had the decency to station himself on the northern frontier where Russia was the enemy, yet no one can wonder at the Empress Queen prohibiting her son from taking the recreation of high treason to amuse his leisure hours, and occupying his youth and exposing his person in shaking the throne which he was one day to fill. At length, however, the day arrived which he had so long eagerly panted for, when he was to become personally acquainted with the idol of his devotion. His inflexible parent had, in 1766, prevented them from meeting at

Torgau; but three years after they had an interview of some days at Neiss in Silesia, the important province which Frederic had wrested from the Austrian crown. The veteran monarch has well conveyed an idea of his admirer in one of his historical works, which indeed contains very few sketches of equal merit :—" Il affectoit une franchise qui lui sembloit naturelle ; son caractere aimable marquoit de la gaieté jointé à la vivacité ; mais avec le désir d'apprendre, il n'avoit pas la patience de s'instruire." And certainly this impatience of the means, proportioned to an eagerness for the end, was the distinguishing feature of his whole character and conduct through life, from the most important to the most trivial of his various pursuits.

Although Frederick had a perfect right to look down upon Joseph in this view as well as in many others, and although there can be no sort of comparison between the two men in general, yet is it equally certain that in one most important particular a close resemblance may be traced between them, and the same defect may be found marring the projects of both. Their internal administration was marked with the same intermeddling and controlling spirit, than which a more mischievous character cannot belong to any system of rule. It is indeed an error into which all sovereigns and all ministers are very apt to fall, when they avoid the opposite, perhaps safer, extreme of indifference to their duties. Nor was he the more likely to steer a middle course, whose power had no limits; whose ideas of government were taken from the mechanical discipline of an army; and whose abilities so far exceeded the ordinary lot of royal understandings, that he seemed to have some

grounds for thinking himself capable of every thing, while he despised the talents of every body else. Yet must it be allowed, that if all other proofs were wanting, this one undoubted imperfection in Frederic's nature is a sufficient ground for ranking him among inferior minds, and for denying him those higher qualities of the understanding which render such faculties beneficial, as he unquestionably possessed. A truly great genius will be the first to prescribe limits for its own exertions ; to discover the sphere within which its powers must be concentrated in order to work, beyond which their diffusion can only uselessly dazzle. But this was a knowledge, and a self-command, that Frederic never attained. Though the ignorance and weakness which he displayed, in the excessive government of his kingdom, were thrown into the shade by his military glory, or partially covered by his cleverness and activity, they require only to be viewed apart, in order to excite as much ridicule as was ever bestowed on the Emperor Joseph, whose system of administration indeed greatly resembled his neighbour's, unless that he had more leisure to show his good intentions by his blunders, and was guided by better principles in the prosecution of his never-ending schemes. Like him, the Prussian ruler conceived that it was his duty to be eternally at work ; to take every concern in his dominions upon his own shoulders ; seldom to think mens' interest safe when committed to themselves, much less to delegate to his ministers any portion of the superintending power, which must yet be every where present and constantly on the watch. Both of those princes knew enough of detail to give them a relish for affairs ; but

they were always wasting their exemplary activity in marring the concerns which belonged not to their department ; and extending their knowledge of other people's trades, instead of forming an acquaintance with their own. While other monarchs were making a business of pleasure, they made a pleasure of business ; but, utterly ignorant how much of their professional duties resolved into a wise choice of agents, with all their industry and wit, they were only mismanaging a part of the work, and leaving the rest undone ; so that it may fairly be questioned whether their dominions would not have gained by the exchange, had their lives been squandered in the seraglio, and there affairs entrusted to cabinets of more quiet persons with more ordinary understandings.

But although these two eminent men were equally fond of planning and regulating, as they indulged their propensity in different circumstances, so their schemes were not pursued in the same manner, and have certainly been attended with different results. Joseph was a legislator and a projector. From the restlessness of his spirit, and the want of pressing affairs to employ his portion of talent, his measures were often rather busy and needless, than seriously hurtful ; and as the conception of a plan resulted from his activity and idleness, he was still vacant and restless after the steps had been taken for its execution, and generally strangled it by his impatience to witness the fruits of his wisdom ; like the child who plants a bean, and plucks it up when it has scarcely sprouted, to see how it is growing. Thus it happened, that many of his innovations were done away by himself, while others had no tendency to

operate any change. Those which were opposed, he only pushed to a certain length, and then knew how to yield, after mischief had been done by the struggle; but few of them survived his own day; chiefly such as anticipated, by a slight advance, the natural course of events. Frederic, on the other hand, was not placed in easy circumstances; he was active from necessity, as much as from vanity; he was an adventurer, whose projects must be turned to some account; not an idle amateur, who can amuse himself with forming a new scheme after the others have failed. Although then, like Joseph, he could afford his designs little time to ripen, yet he contrived to force something out of them by new applications of power; thus bringing to a premature conclusion operations in their own nature violent and untimely. Hence his necessities, like his rival's idle impatience, allowed his plans no chance of coming to perfection; but while Joseph destroyed the scheme of yesterday to make a new one, Frederic carried it forcibly into an imperfect execution before it was well laid. Add to this, that the power of the latter being more absolute, and of a description the best adapted for enforcing detailed commands, he was better enabled to carry through his regulating and interfering plans against whatever opposition they might encounter, while his superior firmness of character, and his freedom from the various checks which principle or feeling imposed upon the Austrian monarch, precluded all escape from the rigour of his administration by any other than fraudulent means. Thus, the consequences of his too much governing, of his miserable views in finance, and of his constant errors in the principles of commercial legislation, are to be traced at this day through

the various departments of the Prussian states. Nor can it be asserted in the present instance, that the powers of individual interest have sufficed to produce their natural effects upon human industry in spite of the shackles by which it has been fettered and cramped.

The intercourse between these two sovereigns which took place at Neiss, in 1769, was not their only meeting; they had another the year after at Neustadt; and here, if ever, the remark of Voltaire proved correct, "that the meetings of Sovereigns are perilous to their subjects;" for here was arranged that execrable crime against the rights of men and of nations, which has covered the memory of its perpetrators with incomparably less infamy than they deserved, the Partition of Poland. Although Joseph's mother was still alive and suffered him to share none of her authority, yet this negotiation, in which he undeniably was engaged, deprives him of all pretext for withdrawing from his portion of the disgrace which so justly covers the parties to that foul transaction.

It is certain, however, and it is a melancholy truth, that this abominable enterprise is the only one of all the Emperor's undertakings that ever succeeded. His less guilty attempt in Belgium, his harmless changes in Austria, his projects of useful reform in Italy, all failed and failed signally, for the most part through the careless and unreflecting manner in which he formed his plans, and his want of patience in allowing time for their execution. His absurd fancy of being crowned King of Hungary at Vienna, instead of Presburg, and transporting the regalia out of the country, without the possibility of effecting any good pur-

pose, offended the national pride of the Hungarians, and roused their suspicions of further designs against their rights to such a pitch, that for the rest of his reign he had to encounter the opposition of those upon whose protection his mother had thrown herself in her extremity, and who had sworn "To die for their King Maria Theresa." His Flemish reforms, and indeed his attempts upon the liberties of the Flemings, ended in exciting an open rebellion, which convulsed the Netherlands at the time of his death. In a far nobler object his steadiness failed as usual, and his ill-digested and rash innovations rather confirmed than extirpated the evil he wished to destroy. He designed to suppress the Monasteries, to prevent Appeals to Rome, and to retain the power of Ordination and Deprivation within the country. But he proceeded in so inconsiderate a manner as to raise universal alarm among all classes of the Clergy, and even to make the Pope undertake a journey from Rome with the view of turning him aside from his projects, by showing their dangerous consequences. A courteous reception was all the Sovereign Pontiff received; and after his return to Italy, the Emperor rashly abolished the Diocesan Seminaries, reserving only five or six for the whole of his vast dominions; new modelled the limits of the dioceses, and altered the whole law of marriage, granting, for the first time in a Catholic country, the liberty of divorce. He removed at the same time the images from the churches, to show that he could, in trifling as well as graver matters, pursue the course of premature innovation, and that he was ignorant of the great rule of practical wisdom in government, which forbids us to hurt strong and general feelings where no

adequate purpose is to be served, how trifling or absurd soever the subject matter may be to which these feelings relate. The removal of images however was far from the most trifling of the details into which he thrust his improving hand. He wearied out the clergy as well as their flocks with innumerable regulations touching fasts, processions, ceremonies of the Church, every thing, as has been well observed, with which the civil power has the least right to meddle, and, it might be added, every thing the most beneath a Sovereign's regard; so that Frederic used not unhappily to speak of him as his "brother the Sexton" (*mon frère le Sacristain*). Every one knows how such freaks of power, the growth of a little mind, torment and irritate their objects even more than they lower the reputation and weaken the authority of their authors.

Having formerly, with a restlessness so foolish as in his position almost to be criminal, chosen the moment of the whole of his people being flung into consternation by his measures, as the fittest opportunity for going abroad upon a tour through France, where he passed some months in envying all he saw, and being mortified by its superiority to his own possessions, novelty being no cause of this journey, for he had been all over that fine country four years before—so now, after having refused the Pope's request, and proceeded still more rapidly in his ecclesiastical changes since the pontifical visit, he chose to return it immediately after he had given this offence; and he passed his time at Rome in vainly endeavouring to obtain the co-operation of Spain with his project for entirely throwing off all allegiance to the Holy See. A few years after, this wandering Emperor

repaired to Russia, and accompanied Catherine on her progress through the southern parts of her empire. Here he met with a sovereign who resembled him in one point and no more ; she was devoured by the same restless passion for celebrity, and in her domestic administration undertook every thing to finish nothing, how effectively soever she might accomplish the worser objects of her criminal ambition abroad. A witty remark of his connected with this weakness is recorded, and proves sufficiently that he could mark in another what he was unable to correct in himself. She had laid the first stone of a city, to be called by her name, and she requested him to lay the second. "I have begun and finished," said he, "a great work with the Empress. She laid the first stone of a city and I laid the last, all in one day."

His excessive admiration of Frederic, combined with his thirst of military glory, in the war of the Bavarian succession 1778, had the effect of neutralising each other. He preferred corresponding to fighting with his adversary, who called it a campaign of the pen. Under the mediation of France peace was speedily restored, after an active and vigorous interchange of letters for some months, and with no other result. But the war with the Turks, into which Catherine inveigled him, was of a very different character. With them no written compositions could produce any effects ; and a series of disasters ensued, which ended in the enemy menacing Vienna itself, after overrunning all Lower Hungary. It was in vain that he endeavoured to rally his defeated troops, or win back victory to his standard by the most indiscriminate severity ; cashiering officers by the pla-

toon, and shooting men by the regiment, until at length old Marshal Laudohn came forth from his retirement, and the men, animated by the sight of their ancient chief, repulsed the enemy, resumed the offensive, and forced Belgrade to capitulate without a siege. At this critical moment, and ere yet he could taste the pleasure, to him so novel, of success, death closed his eyes upon the ruin of his affairs in Belgium, their inextricable embarrassment at home, the death of a sister-in-law (first wife of Leopold), to whom he was tenderly attached, and the unwonted, perhaps unexpected, gleam of prosperity in the Turkish campaign. He died in the flower of his age, and almost at the summit of the confusion created by his restless folly, a sad instance how much mischief a prince may do to others, and how great vexation inflict upon himself, by attempting in mediocrity of resources things which only a great capacity can hope to execute.

The volume which records the transactions of statesmen, often suggests the remark that the success of mediocrity, both in public and in private life, affords a valuable lesson to the world, a lesson the more extensively useful, because the example is calculated to operate upon a far more enlarged scale than the feats of rare endowments. In private individuals, moderate talents, however misused by disproportioned ambition, can produce little harm, except in exposing the folly and presumption of their possessors. But in princes, moderate talents, unaccompanied with discretion and modesty, are calculated to spread the greatest misery over whole nations. The pursuit of renown, when confined to maladministration at home, is extremely mischievous; leading

to restless love of change for change's sake, attempts to acquire celebrity by undertakings which are above the reach of him who makes them, and which involve the community in the consequences of their failure. But the fear always is, that this restless temper, unsustained by adequate capacity may lead to indulging in the Great Sport of Kings, and that wars, even when successful most hurtful to the state, will be waged, without any fair chance of avoiding discomfiture and disgrace. Hence a greater curse can hardly light upon any people than to be governed by a prince in whom disproportioned ambition, or preposterous vanity, is only supported by the moderate talents which, united to sound principles, and under the control of a modest nature, might constitute their safety and their happiness. For it is altogether undeniable that, considering the common failings of princes, the necessary defects of their education, the inevitable tendency of their station to engender habits of self-indulgence, and the proneness which they all feel, when gifted with a superior capacity, to seek dominion or fame by martial deeds, there is far more safety in nations being ruled by sovereigns of humble talents, if these are only accompanied with an ambition proportionably moderate.

THE EMPRESS CATHERINE.

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THE two male conspirators against the liberties of mankind, the rights of nations, the peace of the world, have now been painted, but in colours far more subdued than the natural hues of their crime. It remains that the most profligate of the three should be portrayed, and she a woman !—but a woman in whom the lust of power united with the more vulgar profligacy of our kind, had effaced all traces of the softer nature that marks the sex, and left an image of commanding talents and prodigious firmness of soul, the capacities which constitute a great character, blended with unrelenting fierceness of disposition, unscrupulous proneness to fraud, unrestrained indulgence of the passions, all the weakness and all the wickedness which can debase the worst of the human race.

The Princess Sophia of Anhalt Zerbst, one of the smallest of the petty principalities in which Northern Germany abounds, was married to Peter III., nephew and heir-presumptive to the Russian crown, and she took the name of Catherine, according to the custom of that barbarous nation. The profligacy of Elizabeth, then on the throne of the Czars, was little repugnant to the crapulous life which her future successor led, or to his consort following their joint example. The young bride, accordingly, soon fell into the debauched habits of the court, and she improved upon them ; for having more

than once changed the accomplices of her adulterous indulgences, almost as swiftly as Elizabeth did, she had her husband murdered by her paramour, that is, the person for the time holding the office of paramour; and having gained over the guard and the mob of Petersburg, she usurped the crown to which she could pretend no earthly title. To refute the reports that were current and to satisfy all inquiries as to the cause of Peter's death, she ordered his body to be exposed to public view, and stationed guards to prevent any one from approaching near enough to see the livid hue which the process of strangling had spread over his features.

The reign thus happily begun, was continued in the constant practice of debauchery and the occasional commission of convenient murder. Lover after lover was admitted to the embraces of the Messalina of the North, until soldiers of the guards were employed in fatiguing an appetite which could not be satiated. Sometimes the favourite of the day would be raised to the confidence and the influence of prime minister; but after a while he ceased to please as the paramour, though he retained his ministerial functions. One of the princes of the blood having been pitched on by a party to be their leader, was thrown into prison; and when the zeal of that party put forward pretences to the throne on his behalf, the imperial Jezebel had him murdered in his dungeon as the shortest way of terminating all controversy on his account, and all uneasiness. The mediocrity of her son Paul's talents gave her no umbrage, especially joined to the eccentricity of his nature, and his life was spared. Had he given his tigress mother

a moment's alarm, he would speedily have followed his unhappy father to the regions where profligacy and parricide are unknown.

Although Catherine was thus abandoned in all her indulgences and unscrupulous in choosing the means of gratifying her ambition especially, yet did she not give herself up to either the one kind of vice or the other, either to cruelty or to lust, with the weakness which in little minds lends those abominable propensities an entire and undivided control. Her lovers never were her rulers; her licentiousness interfered not with her public conduct: her cruelties were not numerous and wanton; not the result of caprice or the occupation of a wicked and malignant nature, but the expedients, the unjustifiable, the detestable expedients, to which she had recourse when a great end was to be attained. The historian who would fully record the life of the Czarina, must deform his page with profligacy and with crimes that resemble the disgusting annals of the Cæsars; but the blot would be occasional only and the darkness confined to a few pages, instead of blackening the whole volume, as it does that of Tacitus or Suetonius; for she had far too great a mind to be enslaved by her passions or merely mischievous in her feelings, although the gusts of one carried her away, and what of the other was amiable, had far too little force to resist the thirst for dominion, which, with the love of indulgence, formed the governing motive of her conduct.

Her capacity was of an exalted order. Her judgment was clear and sure; her apprehension extraordinarily quick; her sagacity penetrating; her pro-

vidence and circumspection comprehensive. To fear, hesitation, vacillation, she was an utter stranger; and the adoption of a design was with her its instant execution. But her plan differed widely from those of her companion Joseph II., or even of her neighbour Gustavus III. They resembled far more those of her long-headed accomplice of Prussia. They were deeply laid in general, and for the most part well digested; formed as to their object with no regard to principle, but only to her aggrandisement and glory; framed as to their execution with no regard to the rights, or mercy for the sufferings of her fellow-creatures. Over their execution the same dauntless, reckless, heartless feelings presided; nor was she ever to be turned from her purpose by difficulties and perils, or abated in her desires of success by languor and delay, or quelled in her course by the least remnant of the humane feelings that mark the softer sex, extinct in her bold, masculine and flinty bosom.

In one material particular, and in only one, she seemed to betray her original womanhood, and ceased to pursue the substance after she had gone far enough to gratify her vanity with the shadow of outward appearances and to tickle her ears with popular applause. Her military operations on the side of the East; her attempts at encroachment upon Turkey, whether by skilful negotiations with the Greek chiefs, or warlike movements almost decisively successful against Constantinople;* her measures in concert with Denmark against Sweden,

* Had her admirals pushed their advantages at Tchisme, the Porte was laid prostrate at her feet.

and which only the interposition of England at Copenhagen, in 1788,* prevented from putting Finland in her possession; her share in the execrable Partition of Poland from the beginning of that crime down to its consummation in 1794—all these schemes of her vigorous and daring policy formed a strange contrast with those ebullitions of childish vanity, which laid the foundation of cities in a desert, never to be finished nor even built above the corner-stone; or assembled upon her route through the wastes of her empire thousands of half-naked savages and clothed them with dresses to be transported in the night and serve the next day's show, while she was making a progress through her barren, unpeopled domains; or made the shells of houses be raised one week, along the road where she was to pass, destined the week after to tumble in premature but inevitable ruins; or collected groups of peasants where none could subsist, and had these same groups carried on in the night to greet her next day with another false semblance of an impossible population in another waste. Nor was there much more reality in her councils of lawgivers to prepare a Code for her vast empire, and her instructions, supposed to be written by herself, for guiding their deliberations and assisting their labours. But then she had resolved to be the Semiramis of the North; she must both be the Conqueror of Empires, the Founder of Cities, and the Giver of Laws. But as it was incomparably more easy for an absolute

* Our ambassador threatened to bombard Copenhagen with an English fleet, unless the Danes instantly raised the siege of Gottenburgh.

sovereign at the head of forty millions of slave subjects, with a vast, impregnable, almost unapproachable dominion, if ruled by no principles, to subdue other countries, than to improve her own, and to extend the numbers of her vassals, than to increase their happiness or their civilization, she failed in all the more harmless, or beneficent parts of her schemes, while she unhappily succeeded in many of her warlike and unprincipled projects; and she easily rested satisfied with the name of civil wisdom, and mere outward semblance of plans for internal improvement, while she enjoyed the and reality of territorial aggrandisement through cruelty and violence. The court she paid to men of letters obtained a prompt repayment in flattery; and they lavished upon her never-ending, never-executed plans of administration the praises to which a persevering and successful execution of them would alone have given her a title. Pleased, satisfied with these sounds, she thought no more of the matter, and her name has come down to our times, though close adjoining her own, stript of every title to respect for excellence in any one department of civil wisdom, while her unprincipled policy in foreign affairs has survived her and still afflicts mankind.

A woman of her commanding talents, however, had other holds over the favour of literary men than the patronage which her station enabled her to dispense. Beside maintaining a kind of literary envoy at Paris in the person of Grimm, she invited Diderot to St. Petersburg, and purchased D'Alembert's library; patronised the illustrious Euler, and gratified others of less fame by admitting them to the familiar society of a great monarch: but she also had abilities and information enough

to relish their conversation, and to bear her part in it upon nearly equal terms. She had the manly sense, too, so far superior to the demeanour of Frederic and the other spoilt children of royal nurseries, that no breach of etiquette, no unbecoming familiarity of her lettered guests ever offended her pride, or roused her official dignity for an instant. Diderot used to go so far in the heat of argument as to slap her on the shoulder or knee with the "*emportement*" of a French "*savant*," and he only excited a smile in the well-natured and truly superior person whose rank and even sex he had for the moment forgotten. Her writings, too, are by no means despicable; but the difficulty of ascertaining that any work published by an Empress-regnant proceeds from her own pen deprives criticism of all interest as connected with her literary reputation. The most important of her books, indeed, her Instructions to the Commission for composing a Code of Laws, published in 1770, makes little or no pretension to originality, as whatever it has of value is closely copied from the work of Beccaria. The great variety of her subjects is calculated to augment our suspicions that she made books as she made war, by deputy—by orders from head-quarters. Legislation, history, travels, criticism, dramatic pieces of various kinds, political and moral romances—all pass under her name as the occupation of her leisure hours and the fruits of her prolific pen.

It would be unjust, however, to deny that science owes her important obligations. Her patronage of the Academy of Petersburg was unremitting, and it was unaccompanied by undue interference, the great drawback on all public patronage of letters or literary men, which so often more than balances the benefits it is calculated

to bestow. Flourishing under her auspices, it gave to the world some of the most valuable of Euler's profound and original researches. The journeys of Pallas and Gmelin were directed and supported by her, and they explored the hitherto unknown regions of the Caucasus, ascertained their resources, and described their productions. Dispatched by her orders, Billings explored the Eastern, and Blumager the Northern Ocean. Nor were some beginnings wanting under her reign to establish schools for teaching the more elementary branches of knowledge to her untutored people.*

Beside these worthy and useful works she made some little improvements upon the judicial and financial administration of her empire, and corrected a very few of the more flagrant abuses, the produce of a darker age, which even in Russia could hardly stand their ground amidst the light of the eighteenth century. But the fragments of her reforming or improving schemes which alone have remained behind her, bear the most inconsiderable proportion to the bulk of the designs themselves; and of all the towns she began to build, the canals she planned, the colonies she planted, the manufactories she established, the legislation she chalked out, the thousand-and-one institutions of charity, of learning, of industry, she founded, the very names have perished, and the situations been buried in oblivion, leaving only the reputation to their author of realising Joseph's just though severe picture of a "Sovereign who began every thing and finished nothing."

* The attention paid to education at the present day in Russia is truly praiseworthy; and might make nations ashamed that pretend to far greater civility and refinement.

On the whole, the history of Princes affords few examples of such talents and such force of character on a throne so diverted from all good purposes, and perverted to the working of so much mischief. There have been few abler monarchs in any part of the world. It may well be doubted if there has been one as bad in all the important particulars in which the worth or the wickedness of rulers tells the most powerfully upon the happiness of the world.

The accidental circumstance of sex has sometimes led to instituting comparisons of Catherine with our Elizabeth; but the points of resemblance were few. Both possessed a very strong, masculine understanding; both joined to comprehensive views, the firm resolution without which nothing great is ever achieved; both united a vehement love of power with a determination never to brook their authority being questioned; and both were prepared, though in very different degrees, to sacrifice unscrupulously those whom they regarded as obstacles in the way of its gratification. Whether Elizabeth in the place of Catherine might not have become more daring, and throwing off all the restraints imposed by the Ecclesiastical and Parliamentary Constitution of her country, have attained by open force those ends which she was obliged to compass by intrigue, is a matter of more doubtful consideration. Certainly her reign is sullied by none of those atrocious crimes which cast so dark a shade on the memory of Catherine; nor can any comparison be fairly made between the act which approaches nearest the enormities of the Northern Tyrant, and even the least of those mighty transgressions.

The passions that most influence the sex, present

remarkable points both of contrast and of resemblance in the kind of empire which they exercised over these great sovereigns. The one was the victim of sensual propensities, over which she exercised no kind of control: the other carefully avoided even every appearance of such excesses. So differently were they constituted morally as well as physically, that it is more than doubtful if Catherine ever felt the passion of love, or Elizabeth that of sex, while the latter was in love with some favourite or other all her life, and the existence of the former was a succession of the grossest amours. But in this both pursued the same course, that the favourite of the woman in neither case ever obtained any sway over the Queen; and that the sensual appetites of the one and the tender sentiments of the other, were alike indulged, without for a moment breaking in upon the scheme of their political lives.

Their accession to the thrones of their respective kingdoms was marked by very different circumstances; the one succeeding by inheritance without a possible objection to her right, the other usurping the crown without the shadow of any title at all. Yet the sovereign whose title was indisputable had far more perils and difficulties to encounter in defending her possession, than she who claimed by mere force in contempt of all right. The religious differences which marshalled the English people in two bitterly hostile divisions, kept Elizabeth in constant anxiety during her whole reign, lest the disinclination of one class proving stronger against her than the favour of the other in her behalf, attempts upon her life or her authority might subvert a throne founded upon every ground of law, and fortified by many years of possession. Catherine had no sooner seized upon

the crown of the Czars than all her difficulties vanished, and once only or twice, during her reign of between thirty and forty years, was she ever molested by any threats of a competition for her crown. It is due to the Englishwoman, that her admirable firmness and clemency combined should be recorded in these untoward circumstances. No alarm for her own safety urged her to adopt any cruel expedients, or to consult her security by unlawful means; nor did she ever but once seek a justification of lawless conduct in the extraordinary difficulties and even dangers of her position. Catherine, who had walked to supreme power over her husband's corpse, easily defended her sceptre by the same instruments which had enabled her to grasp it. The single instance in which Elizabeth shed a rival's blood for her own safety, admitted of extenuation, if it could not be justified, by the conspiracy detected against her life; and the times she lived in, rendering assassination perilous, instead of murdering her rival in a dungeon, she at least brought her charges openly into a court of inquiry, and had her tried, judged, executed, under colour of law before the face of the world.

In one thing, and in one alone, the inferiority of the Englishwoman to the German must be admitted; and this arose from the different circumstances of the two Sovereigns, and the feebler authority with which the former was invested. Through her whole reign she was a dissembler, a pretender, a hypocrite. Whether in steering her crooked way between rival sects, or in accommodating herself to conflicting factions, or in pursuing the course she had resolved to follow amidst the various opinions of the people, she ever displayed a degree of cunning and faithlessness which it is impossible

to contemplate without disgust. But if there be any one passage of her life which calls forth this sentiment more than another, it is her vile conduct respecting the execution of Mary Stuart—her hateful duplicity, her execrable treachery towards the instruments she used and sacrificed, her cowardly skulking behind those instruments to escape the censures of the world. This was the crowning act of a whole life of despicable fraud and hypocrisy; and, from the necessity of resorting to this, Catherine's more absolute power set her free: Not that the Empress's history is unaccompanied with traits of a like kind. When her troops had sacked the suburbs of Warsaw, and consummated the partition of Poland by the butchery of thousands of her victims, she had the blasphemous effrontery to celebrate a *Te Deum* in the metropolitan cathedral, and to promulgate an address to the people, professing "to cherish for them the tender feelings of a mother towards her offspring." It vexes the faith of pious men to witness scenes like these, and not see the fires of Heaven descend to smite the guilty and impious actors.

In the whole conduct of their respective governments it would be hard to find a greater contrast than is exhibited by these two famous princesses. While Catherine sacrificed every thing to outward show in her domestic administration, Elizabeth looked ever and only to the substance; the former caring nothing how her people fared or her realms were administered, so she had the appearance of splendour and filled the world with her name; the latter, intent upon the greatest service which a sovereign in her circumstances could perform, the allaying the religious dissensions that distracted all classes of her subjects, and maintaining her

crown independent of all foreign dictation. Assuming the sceptre over a barbarous people scattered through a boundless desert, Catherine found the most formidable obstacles opposed by nature to what was obviously prescribed by the circumstances of her position as her first duty, the diffusing among her rude subjects the blessings of civilisation; but desirous only of the fame which could be reaped from sudden operations, and impatient of the slow progress by which natural improvement must ever proceed, she overcame not those obstacles, and left her country in the state in which it would have been whoever had filled her place. Succeeding to the throne of a nation torn by faction, and ruled by a priesthood at once tyrannical and intolerant, Elizabeth, by wise forbearance, united to perfect steadiness of purpose, by a judicious use of her influence wheresoever her eye, incessantly watchful, perceived that her interposition could help the right cause, above all, by teaching each sect that she would be the servant of none while disposed to be the friend of all, and would lend her support to that faith which her conscience approved without suffering its professors to oppress those of rival creeds, left her country in a state of peace at home as remarkable and as beneficial as the respect which her commanding talents and determined conduct imposed on foreign nations.

The aggrandisement of the Russian empire during Catherine's time, at once the monument of her worst crimes and the source of the influence ever since exerted by her successors over the affairs of Europe, has been felt by all the other powers as the just punishment of their folly in permitting Poland to be despoiled, and

by none more than those who were the accomplices in that foul transaction. It is almost the only part of her administration that remains to signalise her reign; but as long as mankind persist in preferring for the subject of their eulogies mighty feats of power, to useful and virtuous policy, the Empress Catherine's name will be commemorated as synonymous with greatness. The services of Elizabeth to her people are of a far higher order; it is probable that they owe to her the maintenance of their national independence; and it is a large increase of the debt of gratitude thus incurred to this great princess, that ruling for half a century of troublous times, she ruled in almost uninterrupted peace, while by the vigour of her councils, and the firmness of her masculine spirit, she caused the alliance of England to be courted and her name feared by all surrounding nations.

If, finally, we apply to these two Sovereigns the surest test of genius and the best measure of success in their exalted station—the comparative merits of the men by whom they were served—the German sinks into insignificance, while the Englishwoman shines with surpassing lustre. Among the ministers who served Catherine, it would be difficult to name one of whom the lapse of forty years has left any remembrance; but as Elizabeth never had a man of inferior, hardly one of middling capacity in her service, so to this day, at the distance of between two and three centuries, when any one would refer to the greatest statesmen in the history of England, he turns instinctively to the Good Times of the Virgin Queen.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

I.

SEVERAL of the Sketches contained in these volumes have already appeared in print, but as parts scattered throughout other and much larger works.* But great additions have been here made to some of them; as George III.; Lord Chatham; Mr. Perceval; Mr. Canning; Mr. Windham; while the following are entirely new: Lords North; Mansfield; Thurlow; Loughborough; Lord Chief Justice Gibbs; Sir Wm. Grant; Franklin; Joseph II.; Catherine II.; Gustavus III.; and the Remarks on Party.

II.

THE kindness of a most accomplished and venerable person, the ornament of a former age, and fortunately still preserved to enlighten the present, has permitted the insertion of the following interesting note:—

“A circumstance attended Lord Chatham’s eloquent invective against our employment of the Indians in the American war, which we have not handed down to us along with it, but which could hardly fail to be noticed at the time. The very same thing had been done in the former war, carried on in Canada by his authority and under his own immediate superintendence; the French

* Four only of the shorter Sketches are taken from the late work, in four volumes, intituled “Lord Brougham’s Speeches,” which contains a great many others.

had arrayed a tribe of these savage warriors against us, and we, without scruple, arrayed another against them. This he thought fit to deny in the most positive manner, although the ministers offered to produce documents written by himself that proved it, from among the papers at the Secretary's office. A warm debate ensued, and at length Lord Amherst, the General who had commanded our troops in that Canadian war, was so loudly appealed to on all sides, that it compelled him to rise, and, most unwillingly, (for he greatly respected Lord Chatham,) falter out a few words; enough however to acknowledge the fact—a fact admitted generally and even assumed by the opposition lords who spoke afterwards. They seemed to lay the question quietly by as far as it concerned Lord Chatham's veracity, and only insisted upon the difference between the two wars, the one foreign, the other civil; arguing also, that we might have been under some necessity of using retaliation, since the French certainly first began the practice so justly abhorred. The Annual Register for 1777 states, that Mr. Burke took the same course in the House of Commons.

“Upon hearing what had passed in the House of Lords, Lord Bute exclaimed with astonishment—‘Did Pitt really deny it?—Why, I have letters of his still by me, singing *Io Pæans* over the advantages we gained through our Indian allies.’ Could what he thus said have been untrue, when it was almost a soliloquy spoken rather *before* than *to* his wife and daughters, the only persons present? The letters he mentioned were probably neither official nor confidential, but such common notes as might pass between him and Lord Chatham while still upon a footing of some intimacy.

“It must be observed, that in 1777 Lord Bute had

long withdrawn from all connexions, lived in great retirement, and had no intercourse whatever with the people then in power."

III.

THE following very interesting letter is from the youngest and only surviving daughter of Lord North. All comment upon its merits or its value is superfluous:—

"MY DEAR LORD BROUGHAM,

"You mentioned to me the other night, your intention of writing the character of my father, to be placed among some other characters of the statesmen of the last century, that you are preparing for the press, and at the same time stated the difficulty of describing a man of whom you had no personal knowledge. This conversation has induced me to cast back my mind to the days of my childhood and early youth, that I may give you such impressions of my father's private life, as those recollections will afford.

"Lord North was born in April, 1733; he was educated at Eton school, and then at Trinity College, Oxford; and he completed his academical studies with the reputation of being a very accomplished and elegant classical scholar. He then passed three years upon the Continent, residing successively in Germany, Italy and France, and acquiring the languages of those countries, particularly of the last. He spoke French with great fluency and correctness; this acquirement, together with the observations he had made upon the men and manners of the countries he had visited, gave him what Madame de Staël called *l'Esprit Européen*, and enabled him to be as agreeable a man in Paris, Naples, and Vienna, as he

was in London. Among the lighter accomplishments he acquired upon the Continent, was that of dancing; I have been told that he danced the most graceful minuet of any young man of his day; this I must own surprised me, who remember him only with a corpulent heavy figure, the movements of which were rendered more awkward and were impeded by his extreme nearsightedness before he became totally blind. In his youth, however, his figure was slight and slim; his face was always plain, but agreeable, owing to his habitual expression of cheerfulness and good humour; though it gave no indication of the brightness of his understanding.

“ Soon after his return to England, at the age of twenty-three, he was married to Miss Speck, of White-lackington Park, Somersetshire, a girl of sixteen: she was plain in her person, but had excellent good sense; and was blessed with singular mildness and placidity of temper. She was also not deficient in humour, and her conversational powers were by no means contemptible; but she, like the rest of the world, delighted in her husband's conversation, and being by nature shy and indolent, was contented to be a happy listener during his life, and after his death her spirits were too much broken down for her to care what she was. Whether they had been in love with each other when they married I don't know, but I am sure there never was a more happy union than theirs during the thirty-six years that it lasted. I never saw an unkind look, or heard an unkind word pass between them; his affectionate attachment to her was as unabated, as her love and admiration of him.

“ Lord North came into office first, as one of the Lords of the Treasury, I believe, about the year 1763, and in

1765 he was appointed as one of the Joint Pay-masters.* In 1769 he became Chancellor of the Exchequer, and some years after, First Lord of the Treasury. He never would allow us to call him Prime Minister, saying, there was no such thing in the British Constitution. He continued in office thirteen years : during the three last he was most anxious to retire, but he suffered himself to be overcome by the earnest entreaties of George the Third that he should remain. At length the declining majorities in the House of Commons made it evident, that there must be a change of ministry, and the King was obliged reluctantly to receive his resignation. This was a great relief to his mind ; for, although I do not believe that my father ever entertained any doubt as to the justice of the American war, yet I am sure that he wished to have made peace three years before its termination. I perfectly recollect the satisfaction expressed by my mother and my elder sisters upon this occasion, and my own astonishment at it ; being at that time a girl of eleven years old, and hearing in the nursery the lamentations of the women about ‘ My Lord’s going out of power’ (viz., the power of making their husbands tide-waiters), I thought going out of power must be a sad thing, and that all the family were crazy to rejoice at it !

“ It is hardly necessary to say, that Lord North was perfectly clean-handed and pure in money matters, and

* An anecdote is related of his Paymastership which will paint, though in homely colours, his habitual good humour. He was somewhat disappointed at finding he had a colleague, who was to divide the emoluments of the office, which was then chiefly prized for its large perquisites. The day he took possession of the official house, a dog had dirtied the hall, and Lord North, ringing for the servant, told him to be sure, in clearing the nastiness away, that he took half of it to his colleague, as it was a perquisite of the Joint office.—EDITOR.

that he left office a poorer man than when he came into it. His father being still living at that time, his income would have scantily provided for the education and maintenance of his six children, and for the support of his habitual, though unostentatious hospitality, but the office of Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports becoming vacant, the King conferred it upon him. His circumstances, by this means, became adequate to his wishes, as he had no expensive tastes, or love of splendour, but he was thoroughly liberal, and had great enjoyment in social intercourse, which even in those days was not to be had without expense. Lord North did not long continue out of office, the much criticised Coalition taking place the year following, 1783. The proverb says, 'Necessity acquaints us with strange bedfellows : ' it is no less true, that dislike of a third party reconciles adversaries. My eldest brother was a Whig by nature, and an enthusiastic admirer of Mr. Fox ; he, together with Mr. Adam, and Mr. Eden, (afterwards Lord Auckland) were, I believe, the chief promoters of the Coalition. My mother, I remember, was averse to it, not that she troubled her head with being a Tory or a Whig, but she feared it would compromise her husband's political consistency. I do not pretend to give any opinion upon this subject, having been too young at the time to form any, and since I grew up I have always been too decided a Whig myself to be a fair judge. This ministry, in which Mr. Fox was at the head of the Foreign, Lord North of the Home Office, and the Duke of Portland of the Treasury, lasted but a few months : in 1784 Mr. Pitt began his long administration. My father, after he was out of office, attended parliament, and sometimes spoke and voted, independent of the opinions of his new allies ; but this

made no difference in the cordiality of their friendship, which remained unimpaired to the end of his life.

“ I will now attempt to give you my impressions of my father’s style of conversation and character in private life. His wit was of the most genuine and playful kind ; he related (*narroit*) remarkably well, and liked conversing upon literary subjects ; yet so completely were all these ingredients mixed and amalgamated by good taste, that you would never have described him as a sayer of *bon mots*, or a teller of good stories, or as a man of literature, but as a most agreeable member of society and truly delightful companion. His manners were those of a high-bred gentleman, particularly easy and natural ; indeed, good-breeding was so marked a part of his character, that it would have been affectation in him to have been otherwise than well-bred. With such good taste and good breeding, his raillery could not fail to be of the best sort—always amusing and never wounding. He was the least fastidious of men, possessing the happy art of extracting any good that there was to be extracted out of anybody. He never would let his children call people *bore*s ; and I remember the triumphant joy of the family, when, after a tedious visit from a very prosy and empty man, he exclaimed, ‘ Well, that man *is* an insufferable bore !’ He used frequently to have large parties of foreigners and distinguished persons to dine with him at Bushy Park. He was himself the life and soul of those parties. To have seen him then, you would have said that he was there in his true element. Yet I think that he had really more enjoyment when he went into the country on a Saturday and Sunday, with only his own family, or one or two intimate friends : he then entered into all the jokes and fun of his children, was the com-

panion and intimate friend of his elder sons and daughters, and the merry, entertaining playfellow of his little girl, who was five years younger than any of the others. To his servants he was a most kind and indulgent master: if provoked by stupidity or impertinence, a few hasty, impatient words might escape him; but I never *saw* him *really out of humour*. He had a drunken, stupid groom, who *used* to provoke him; and who, from this uncommon circumstance, was called by the children ‘the man that puts papa in a passion;’ and I think he continued all his life putting papa in a passion, and being forgiven, for I believe he died in his service.

“In the year 1787 Lord North’s sight began rapidly to fail him, and in the course of a few months he became totally blind, in consequence of a palsy on the optic nerve. His nerves had always been very excitable, and it is probable that the anxiety of mind which he suffered during the unsuccessful contest with America, still more than his necessary application to writing, brought on this calamity, which he bore with the most admirable patience and resignation; nor did it affect his general cheerfulness in society. But the privation of all power of dissipating his mind by outward objects, or of solitary occupation, could not fail to produce at times extreme depression of spirits, especially as the malady proceeded from the disordered state of his nerves. These fits of depression seldom occurred, except during sleepless nights, when my mother used to read to him, until he was amused out of them, or put to sleep.

“In the evenings, in Grosvenor-square, our house was the resort of the best company that London afforded at that time. Mr. Fox, Mr. Burke, Mr. Sheridan, occasionally; and Lord Stormont, Lord John Townshend, Mr. Wind-

ham, Sir James Erskine, afterwards Lord Rosslyn, his uncle, then Lord Loughborough, habitually frequented our drawing-room: these, with various young men and women, his children's friends, and whist-playing ladies for my mother, completed the society. My father always liked the company of young people, especially of young women who were sensible and lively; and we used to accuse him of often rejoicing when his old political friends left his side and were succeeded by some lively young female. Lord North, when he was out of office, had no private secretary; even after he became blind, his daughters, particularly the two elder read to him by turns, wrote his letters, led him in his walks, and were his constant companions.

"In 1792 his health began to decline: he lost his sleep and his appetite; his legs swelled, and symptoms of dropsy were apparent. At last, after a peculiarly uneasy night, he questioned his friend and physician, Dr. Warren, begging him not to conceal the truth; the result was, that Dr. Warren owned that water had formed upon the chest, that he could not live many days, and that a few hours might put a period to his existence. He received this news not only with firmness and pious resignation, but it in no way altered the serenity and cheerfulness of his manners; and from that hour during the remaining ten days of his life, he had no return of depression of spirits. The first step he took, when aware of his immediate danger, was to desire that Mr. John Robinson (commonly known by the name of *the Rat-catcher*) and Lord Auckland might be sent for; they being the only two of his political friends whose desertion had hurt and offended him, he wished before his

death to shake hands cordially and to forgive them. They attended the summons of course, and the reconciliation was effected. My father had always delighted in hearing his eldest daughter, Lady Glenbervie, read Shakspeare, which she did with much understanding and effect. He was desirous of still enjoying this amusement. In the existing circumstances, this task was a hard one; but strong affection, the best source of woman's strength, enabled her to go through it. She read to him great part of every day with her usual spirit, though her heart was dying within her. No doubt she was supported by the Almighty in the pious work of solacing the last hours of her almost idolised parent. He also desired to have the French newspapers read to him. At that time they were filled with alarming symptoms of the horrors that shortly after ensued. Upon hearing them, he said, 'I am going, and thankful I am that I shall not witness the anarchy and bloodshed which will soon overwhelm that unhappy country.' He expired on the 5th of August, 1792.

"Lord North was a truly pious Christian; and (although from his political view of the subject) I believe that one of the last speeches he made in parliament was against the repeal of the Test Act, yet his religion was quite free from bigotry or intolerance, and consisted more in the beautiful spirit of Christian benevolence than in outward and formal observances. His character in private life was, I believe, as faultless as that of any human being can be; and those actions of his public life which appear to have been the most questionable, proceeded, I am entirely convinced, from what one must own was a weakness, though not an unamiable one, and which fol-

lowed him through his life, the want of power to resist the influence of those he loved.

"I remain,

"My dear Lord,

"Gratefully and sincerely yours,

"CHARLOTTE LINDSAY."

"Green-street,

"February the 18th, 1839."

IV.

*Elizabeth's conduct to Mary, Queen of Scots.**

THE whole subject of Mary's conduct has been involved in controversy, chiefly by the partisans of the House of Stuart after the Revolution, and somewhat also by the circumstance of the Catholic party in both England and Scotland taking her part as an enemy of the Reformed religion. Elizabeth's conduct towards her has also in a considerable degree been made the subject of political disputation. But it may safely be affirmed that there are certain facts, which cannot be doubted, which indeed even the most violent partisans of both those Princesses have all along admitted, and which tend to throw a great, though certainly a very unequal degree of blame upon both.—Let us first of all state those unquestioned facts.

1. It is certain that Darnley, Mary's second husband, was foully murdered, and equally certain that Mary was generally suspected, and was openly charged, as an accomplice of the murder, if not the contriver of the crime.

* This Appendix has been added in deference to the suggestion of a friend, whose sound judgment and correct taste are entitled to command all respect, and who considered that an unjust view would be given of Elizabeth's conduct if no addition were made to the sketch in the text.

2. Yet it is equally certain that instead of taking those active steps to bring the perpetrators to punishment, required both by conjugal duty and by a just desire to wipe off the stain affixed to her character, she allowed a mere mock trial to take place which outraged every principle of justice, while she refused Lennox the father's offers of evidence to convict the murderers.

3. Bothwell had only of late been admitted to her intimate society; he was a man of coarse manners and profligate character, universally accused and now known to have been the principal in the murder. No one pretended at the time seriously to doubt his guilt; yet immediately after the event she married him, and married him with a mixture of fraud, a pretence of being forced to it, so coarse that it could deceive nobody, and so gross as only to be exceeded by the still grosser passion which actuated her whole conduct.

4. That he was married when their intimacy began, is not denied. Nor is it doubted that she consented to marry him before his former marriage had been dissolved.

5. The divorce which dissolved it was hurried through the Courts in four days, by the grossest fraud and collusion between the parties. Hence Mary was as much guilty of bigamy in marrying him as was the Duchess of Kingston two centuries later; for the Duchess produced also a sentence of separation *à mensâ et thoro* in her defence, obtained with incomparably greater formality—but obtained through collusion, and therefore considered as a nullity—and she was accordingly convicted of the felony.

6. These acts of Mary's were of so abominable a nature that all rational men were turned away from sup-

porting her, and her deposition was almost a matter of course in any Christian or indeed any civilised country.

But as regards Elizabeth :

1. When Mary took refuge in England, all her previous misconduct gave Elizabeth no kind of title to detain her as a prisoner, nor any right even to deliver her up a prisoner at the request of the Scots, had they demanded her.

2. In keeping her a prisoner for twenty years under various pretexts, Elizabeth gave her ample license and complete justification for whatever designs she might form to regain her liberty.

3. The conspiracy of Norfolk looked only to the maintaining of her strict rights, the restoration of her personal liberty, and her marriage with that ill-fated nobleman, which she was willing to solemnise as soon as she could be divorced from Bothwell, who having lived for some years as a pirate, afterwards died mad in a Danish prison.

4. Babington's conspiracy included rebellion and also the assassination of Elizabeth; and great and certainly very fruitless pains are taken by Mary's partisans to rebut the proofs of her having joined in it. She, indeed, never pretended to resist the proof that she was a party to the conspiracy in general; she only denied her knowledge of the projected assassination. But supposing her to have been also cognisant of that, it seems not too relaxed a view of duty to hold that one sovereign princess detained unjustifiably in captivity by another for twenty years, has a right to use even extreme measures of revenge. In self-defence all means are justifiable, and Mary had no other means than war to the knife against her oppressor.

5. For this accession to Babington's conspiracy, chiefly,

she was brought to trial by that oppressor who had violated every principle of justice and every form of law, in holding her a prisoner for twenty years.

6. Being convicted on this trial, the sentence was executed by Elizabeth's express authority ; although, with a complication of falsehood utterly disgusting, and which holds her character up to the scorn of mankind in all ages, she pretended that it had been done without her leave and against her will, and basely ruined the unfortunate man, who, yielding to her commands, had conveyed to be executed the orders she had signed with her own hand.

The pretence upon which the proceeding of the trial may the most plausibly be defended, is that a Foreign Prince while in this country, like all foreigners within its bounds, is subject to the municipal law, and may be punished for its violation. This, however, is a groundless position in law, even if the Foreign Prince were voluntarily here resident ; for not even his representative, his ambassador, is subject to our laws, either civil or criminal, as a statute declaratory of the former law has distinctly laid down,* although at an earlier period Cromwell hanged one for murder. But if it be said that this part of international law had not been well settled in the sixteenth century, at all events it was well known then that no power can have a right to seize on the person of a Foreign Prince and detain him prisoner ; and that consequently, if so detained, that Foreign Prince owes no allegiance to the laws of the realm.

But although Elizabeth's conduct towards Mary Stuart is wholly unjustifiable, and fixes a deep stain upon her memory (blackened still more by the gross falsehood

* The Stat. 7. Anne, c. 12.

and hypocrisy with which it was thickly covered over), it may nevertheless be said that she merits the commendation of having acted against her kinswoman with open hostility, and sacrificed her by the forms at least of a trial, instead of procuring her life to be privately taken away. A little reflection will remove any such argument used in mitigation of her crime. That she preferred murder by due course of law to murder by poison, was the merit of the age rather than of the person. Two centuries, perhaps one, earlier, she would have used the secret services of the gaoler in preference to the public prostitution of the judge. But she knew that Mary's death, if it happened in prison, even in the course of nature, would always be charged upon her as its author; and she was unwilling to load her name with the shame, even if she cared not how her conscience might be burdened with the guilt. She was well aware, too, of the formidable party which Mary had in the country, and dreaded not only to exasperate the Catholic body, but to furnish them with the weapons against herself which so great an outrage on the feelings of mankind would have placed in their hands. Besides, she well knew that the trial was a matter of easy execution and of certain result. She was delivered over, not to a judge and jury acting under the authority of the law in its ordinary course of administration, but to forty peers and privy councillors, selected by Elizabeth herself, whose very numbers, by dividing the responsibility, made their submission to the power that appointed them a matter of perfect ease, and the conviction of Mary an absolute certainty. In every view, then, which can be taken of the case, little credit can accrue to Elizabeth for preferring a mode of destroying her rival quite as easy,

quite as sure, and far more safe, than any other : Not to mention that it must be a strange kind of honour which can stoop to seek the wretched credit of having declined to commit a midnight murder, rather than destroy the victim by an open trial.

If, then, it be asked upon what grounds Elizabeth's memory has escaped the execration so justly due to it, the answer is found not merely in the splendour of her other actions, and the great success of her long reign under circumstances of extraordinary difficulty, but rather in the previous bad conduct of Mary—the utter scorn in which all mankind held her except those whom personal attachment or religious frenzy blinded—the certain effect of time in opening the eyes of even those zealots, when her truly despicable conduct came to be considered—and chiefly in the belief that she, who was supposed to have joined in the assassination of her own husband, and was admitted to have married his brutal murderer while his hands were still reeking with blood, had also been a party to a plot for assassinating the English queen. These considerations have not unnaturally operated on men's minds against the victim of Elizabeth's crooked and cruel policy ; and it is an unavoidable consequence of sympathy for the oppressed being weakened, that the hatred of the oppressor is diminished in proportion.

The foregoing statements have proceeded upon the plan of assuming no facts as true respecting the conduct either of Mary or Elizabeth, excepting those which are on all hands admitted, and which have indeed never been denied, either at the time or in the heats engendered by subsequent controversy. The result is against both those famous Queens ; loading the memory of the one with a degree of infamy which no woman of ordinary feeling could endure, subjecting the other to the gravest

charges of perfidy and injustice. But it would be giving a very imperfect view of Mary's conduct were we to stop at these admitted facts.

The proofs against her in respect of Darnley's murder, although not sufficient to convict her in a court of justice, are quite decisive of her guilt, when the question is propounded as one of historical evidence. Indeed it may be safely affirmed, that no disputed point of historical fact rests upon stronger evidence. The arguments to prove the letters genuine are not easily resisted. Mr. Hume's admirable summary of those arguments is nearly conclusive. The other concurring circumstances, as the statements of Bothwell's servants at their execution, are also very strong. But above every thing, her own conduct both in obstructing all search after the murderers, and in immediately marrying their ringleader, seems to place her guilt beyond a doubt. Even this, however, is not all. She submitted the case to solemn investigation, when she found that the effects of her infamy were fatal to her party, clouding over all her prospects of success, or even of deliverance; and as soon as the worst part of the charges against her were brought forward, and the most decisive evidences of her guilt adduced, the letters under her own hand, she did not meet the charge or even attempt to prove the writings forgeries, but sought shelter behind general protestations, and endeavoured to change inquiry into a negotiation, although distinctly warned that such a conduct of her case was flying from the trial to which she had submitted, and must prove quite demonstrative of her guilt.

On the whole, it is not going too far to close these remarks with Mr. Hume's observation, that there are three descriptions of men who must be considered beyond the reach of argument, and must be left to their prejudices—

an English Whig, who asserts the reality of the Popish plot; an Irish Catholic, who denies the massacre in 1641; and a Scotch Jacobite, who maintains the innocence of Queen Mary.

It is, however, fit that a remark be added touching the error into which this justly celebrated historian has fallen, and which shows that he knew very little of what legal evidence is, how expertly soever he might deal with historical evidence. After enumerating the proofs adduced at the trial of Mary's accession to the assassination part of Babington's plot, namely, copies taken in Walsingham's office of correspondence with Babington; the confessions of her two secretaries, without torture, but in her absence, and without confronting or cross-examination; Babington's confession, and the confession of Ballard and Savage, that Babington had shown them Mary's letters in cipher,—the historian, adds, that, “in the case of an ordinary criminal, this proof would be esteemed legal and even satisfactory, if not opposed by some other circumstances which shake the credit of the witnesses.” Nothing can betray greater ignorance of the very first principles of the law of evidence. The witnesses he speaks of do not even exist; there is nothing like a witness mentioned in his enumeration of proofs; and how any man of Mr. Hume's acuteness could fancy that what one person confesses behind a prisoner's back that he heard a third person say to that prisoner, or rather that this third person showed him ciphered letters not produced of that prisoner, could be any thing like evidence to affect him, is truly astonishing, and shows how dangerous a thing it is for the artist most expert in his own line, to pronounce an opinion on matters beyond it.

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1. The first part of the document is a list of names.

2.

